SUMMER READING Hilary Mantel, Marguerite Feitlowitz, & others

COMMONWEAL

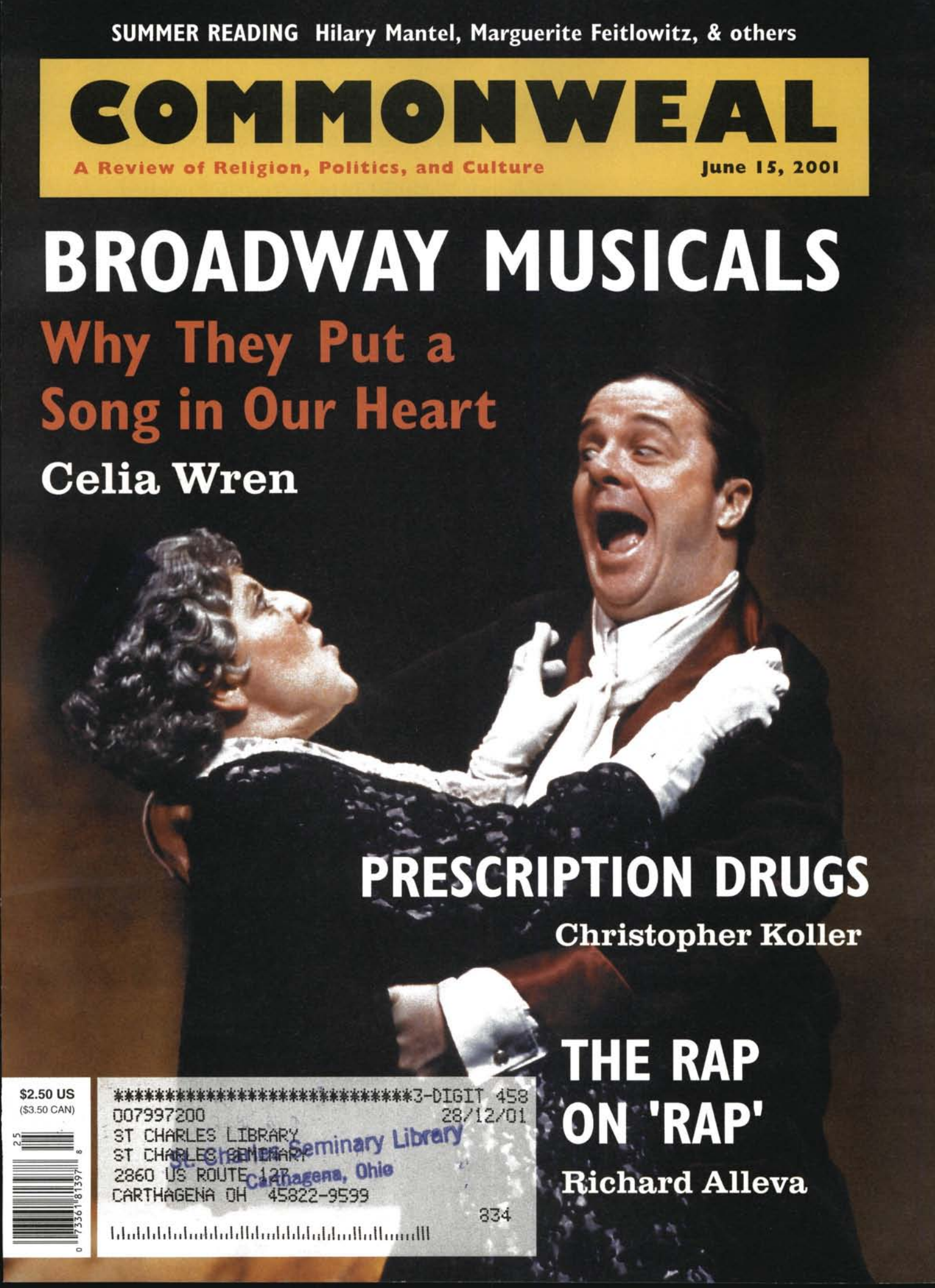
A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

June 15, 2001

BROADWAY MUSICALS

Why They Put a Song in Our Heart

Celia Wren



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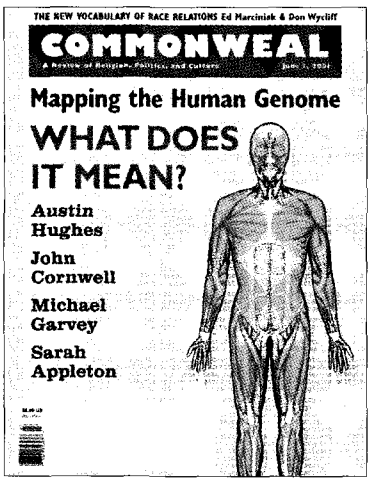

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COMMONWEAL

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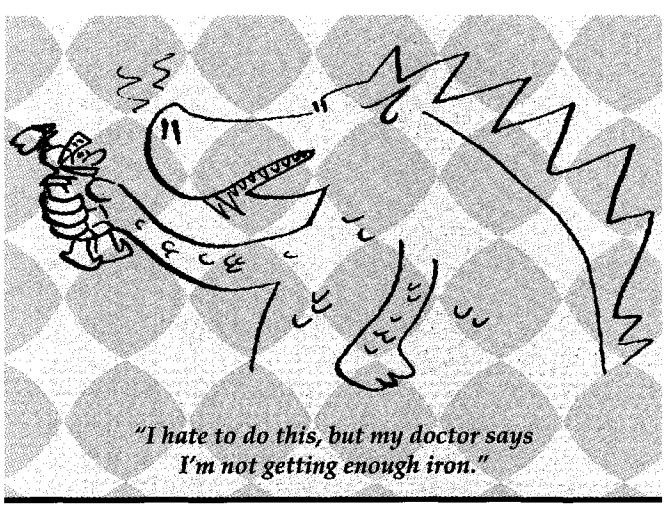

"I hate to do this, but my doctor says I'm not getting enough iron."

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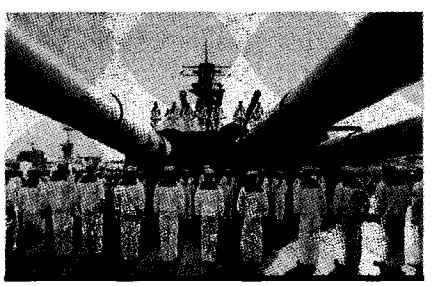

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To the Editors

Maritain's anguish

In part because of my lifelong admiration for Jacques Maritain, Bernard Doering's "Silent Dissenter" (May 18) floored me! Since today's postmodernists probably consider Maritain an anachronistic conservative, who could have imagined that he was ever in fear of Vatican censure?

I had always assumed that as a "safe" Thomist, and a Neo-Scholastic, Maritain enjoyed an unassailably secure position of favor and respect in Rome. And who could have imagined the gentle, otherworldly Maritain anguishing over and probing deeply into the moral implications of contraception long before *Humanae vitae*—and then reaching conclusions opposite to those Paul VI would adopt? Paul should have sought Maritain's wise counsel and listened to him. Had he, the encyclical would have been different, or might not have been written at all.

(REV.) GEORGE P. CARLIN
New York, N.Y.

Terror strikes

So uncharacteristically tender-minded was your recent comment on "L'Affaire Haight" ("Haight on Trial," May 18), that for one terror-stricken moment, I thought I was reading the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Your remarks almost lend credence to the conservative charge of "procedural liberalism": a sort of Wagnerian endless postponement that never achieves resolution. Thus you write: "What is required is dialogue, conversation, criticisms, countercriticisms, prayer, and Christian charity." Certainly these are estimable virtues. But significantly absent is any mention of discernment, judgment, and truth about dogma; nor any acknowledgement of the privileged role of the church's magisterium in this discernment of God's revelation in Christ.

Further, though there is a superficially attractive modesty in putting the *Commonweal* and *America* reviews of *Jesus Symbol of God* on an equal intellectual level (one critical, the other positive), such misplaced "modesty" merely serves to camouflage the depth of the first and the puffery of the second.

Finally, though I will not dispute the need for more openness and accountability in the CDF's process, I would welcome greater forthrightness from all parties concerned. So one might also inquire: Is there a policy of internal Jesuit review of theological writings? What is its purpose and what criteria are in place? To whom does the policy apply? Is the permission of the relevant superior required prior to publication? How is one to know whether it has been sought and received?

My immediate point: too often we lament Roman intervention, yet fail to exercise due authority and assume appropriate responsibility earlier in the process. Appeals to honor "subsidiarity" also entail corresponding obligations.

But I also have a broader ecclesial concern. In reaction to the excesses and abuses of the past, are we experiencing a paralysis of authority and an abdication of responsibility in the postconciliar church that, in effect, represents a complete capitulation to the culture of the therapeutic? Commentators like Christopher Lasch and Robert Bellah, with their analysis of American society's "loose connections and porous institutions," can help us gain some cultural perspective on our polarized squabbles and predicament.

For, ultimately, the issue is one of the discernment of spirits. Here the Ignatian tradition could, indeed, provide inestimable assistance. But to put matters bluntly: To what extent are the "Rules for Thinking, Judging, and Feeling with the Church" of the *Spiritual Exercises* truly present and operative in our "postmodern" ecclesial discernment? Or has theapeutic and consumerist individualism trumped all, our nostalgic rhetoric about "solidarity" notwithstanding?

(REV.) ROBERT P. IMBELLI
Newton Centre, Mass.

The editors reply:

Father Robert Imbelli does "not dispute the need for more openness and accountability in the CDF's process." So that means he agrees, at least in general, with our editorial's criticism of the CDF's methods. Right? Well he does, apparently as long as that accountability doesn't involve "procedural liberalism," a phrase he introduces and sneers at.

But aren't the CDF's procedures precisely the issue (dare we call them procedural autocracy?). It is those procedures, whether in the hands of the CDF, a conclave of bishops, or some other body of doctrinal guardians, that need to become more transparent and fair, precisely to make the church's magisterium more, rather than less, credible. If this be "procedural liberalism," bring it on.

Father Imbelli also reads too much into the examples we offered as tentative steps. Our citation of the book reviews in *Commonweal* and *America* was meant as nothing more than a demonstration that the Catholic community is clearly capable of engaging in a process of discernment that might contribute to the magisterium's discernment. We used the phrases "critical" and "positive," not out of any "superficially attractive modesty," but because it seemed accurate. It would never occur to us to describe Elizabeth Johnson's review as "puffery."

Finally, we wonder if, despite his apparent agreement with our criticism of the CDF, Father Imbelli doesn't prefer the shadowy methods of a clerical culture, whether the Jesuits' or the Vatican's, that is simply no longer credible as a means of guarding "God's revelation in Christ."

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Local politics

Vermont Senator James Jeffords's decision last month to leave the Republican Party, and in so doing turn control of the Senate over to the Democrats, came as a political earthquake to Washington, especially to the Bush administration. Despite the close and disputed presidential election and only the slimmest majorities in the House and Senate, Republicans have been vigorously pursuing President George W. Bush's conservative legislative agenda. Jeffords's defection puts an end to Bush's ability to govern from the right on taxes, military spending, the environment, and other issues. Whether or not it will persuade the Republicans to seek a broader and more moderate consensus is not clear. But whether or not Jeffords's decision changes the ideological tone in Washington, it does remind us that representative democracy still revolves around the decisions of individual men and women. That is something to be grateful for.

Commonweal readers should not have been shaken or surprised by Jeffords's decision. The independent character of Vermont's divided congressional delegation was well reported in Dennis O'Brien's recent profile of the state's senior senator, Patrick Leahy ("Vermont's Leahy," June 16, 2000). Leahy is the only Democrat ever to have been elected to the Senate from Vermont. Historically, Vermont has been a Republican stronghold, but not a conservative Republican stronghold. Explaining why his political opponents do not easily exploit Leahy's liberal voting record, O'Brien noted that "Vermont Republicans are themselves quite liberal." As an example of the state's habit of moderation, O'Brien pointed to Jeffords's support for the National Endowment for the Humanities, a perennial target of cost-cutting conservatives. Jeffords's status as the Republican senator who most often voted with the Clinton administration was also noted. In a small state like Vermont, even senatorial politics is intensely local. For Jeffords and Leahy, that means paying attention to environmental, agricultural, and education issues. Jeffords's decision to become an Independent who will support the Democrats in organizing the Senate exposes the ideological bias of and lack of moderation in Bush's program.

Republicans angered by Jeffords's defection accuse him of grandstanding and opportunism. Despite its Republican heritage, Vermont is an increasingly liberal state, they say, and Jeffords is just following the political winds. Political calculation, of course, cannot be counted out. Still, Jeffords's public statement about his decision was refreshingly straightforward and plainspoken, and his legislative record is remarkably consistent. In explaining his decision, Jeffords alluded to his roots in the "party of Lincoln," but also noted that his Republican predecessors "were Vermonters first." He spoke of independence, social conscience, tolerance, and fiscal responsibility. Given his more liberal views on abortion, the environment, military spending, and judicial philosophy, he acknowledged "it has become a struggle for our [Republican] leaders to deal with me and for me to deal with them." He stressed how Bush's much-touted education bill does not provide the resources needed to improve the nation's schools or address special education needs. In short, Jeffords confessed he could no longer support the tax-cut driven philosophy of his party.

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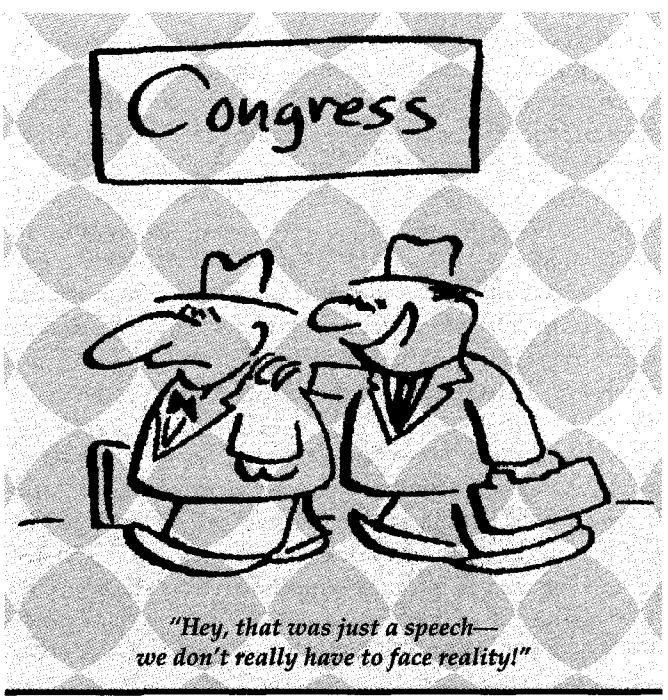
Jeffords's unwillingness to vote for Bush's initial $1.6-trillion tax cut set him on a collision course with the White House. Jeffords thought the tax cut was too large and would inevitably result in curtailing vital domestic programs and producing large deficits. As the *New York Times*'s Paul Krugman has written (May 27), "the pretense that taxes can be sharply cut without undermining the fiscal integrity of the nation has been maintained via financial fakery that, if practiced by the executives of any publicly traded company, would have landed them in jail."

Jeffords has been admirably consistent on the question of taxes. He was the only Republican member of the House of Representatives to vote against Ronald Reagan's tax cut in 1981. As a fiscal conservative, he recognized that Reagan's spending plans would burden the federal government with massive deficits. He was right then, and his skepticism about Bush's tax cuts seems well grounded now.

Democrats are, of course, gratified by this stunning turn of events. But as Jeffords himself warned, his independence and fiscal conservatism will not always be viewed with such enthusiasm by his new political allies. Nor does Jeffords's decision auger well for the diversity and ultimate strength of the political parties. As the stark geographical divisions apparent in the presidential election made clear, both parties are becoming more regionally based and ideologically uniform. Without the vigorous internal party debate that liberal Republicans and conservative and prolife Democrats foster, both parties risk becoming more out of touch with mainstream America.

In a more positive light, however, Jeffords's decision reminds us of how close a senator or congressman often is to the people of his or her state. Like Jeffords, most members of Congress have spent many years in a variety of elected positions. At each level of government, successful politicians must forge a real tie with the people they represent. At some level, they have to communicate a sense of shared values. In doing so, they earn the right to speak on behalf of the citizenry as a whole. Jeffords, it seems, has earned that right in Vermont. In showing us that even in this technological age democratic politics remains personal and questions of conscience paramount, he reminds us of why we value it so highly.



"Hey, that was just a speech— we don't really have to face reality!"

ET CETERA

Pope George on the road ■ The University of Notre Dame's commencement address was delivered on May 20, 2001 by President George W. Bush. To the astonishment of many observers, the avatar of compassionate conservatism sounded like a pope delivering a liberal encyclical. Post-ceremony exegesis rules out composition by the president himself or Notre Dame's public relations department. But whoever the wordsmith, the Vatican should hire him/her immediately.

There were, of course, howls of protest at the president's appropriation of Catholicspeak as part of his campaign to win Catholic voters in 2004. Fortunately Monsignor George G. Higgins, who received Notre Dame's prestigious Laetare Medal, set matters right in his brief address from which we excerpt the following: "There are those among us who argue that evangelization of the poor and also of the new immigrants must be exclusively spiritual. That's a seductive half-truth. The role of the church and its ministry...in addressing the social and economic problems of the new immigrants and indeed of all the impoverished people in our society...is obviously a complex problem and one that leaves ample room for honest differences of opinion about who speaks for the church, under what rubric, or degree of specificity... but to state simplistically that the church's evangelization should be exclusively spiritual finds no support anywhere in the entire corpus of Catholic social teaching."

There were also strenuous objections to the president's drawing Dorothy Day into his orbit. We publish below a letter from her daughter and granddaughter, Tamar and Martha Hennessy.

"As the daughter and granddaughter of Dorothy Day, we feel compelled to speak about the use of her name and work in George W. Bush's commencement speech at Notre Dame. Dorothy was an ardent believer in social justice, the rights of workers, and care of the disenfranchised. Her life's work was dedicated to picking up the pieces of human wreckage, the result of policies that continue to be perpetuated by the Bush administration. It is shameful to have her efforts associated with an administration that gives priority to corporate profiteering over human needs. Dorothy understood that a just system was as important as her ideal of personalism, where each takes individual responsibility for the well-being of all. George W. Bush's speechwriters have distorted the message of Dorothy Day by using her words on the works of mercy in their arsenal of deceit."

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE POPE SAYS!

And then what?

Last month I gave a lecture on women in the church, and promptly incited a vigorous rebuttal. My conservative (female) critic offered correction and admonition for my fundamental error. "Who are you to set yourself up as an individual in opposition to the pope and the authentic magisterium?" The lady did not hurl the dreadful words "cafeteria Catholic" my way, but the implication was there.

No, no, I protested (dangerous word), I am a convinced Roman Catholic. I believe in the one, holy, apostolic church inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth through the ages. Indeed, I am a convert and fully appreciate our communion. Alas, however, my critic was also a convert, and took a very firm line. Many ultraconservatives I've met in my travels applaud and celebrate the moral certainty given to them by their Catholicism. From their point of view the great thing about being a Catholic in a confusing and deteriorating world is that you have an infallible guide to truth. Some papal fundamentalists talk as though the last act of conscience that a Catholic ever has to make is to submit mind and will to the pope and to church authority.

But how can you deny, I reply, trying to be a good dialogue partner, that the church has changed its teachings over the centuries? Suppose the church authorities say it is morally permissible to confine Jews to ghettos, enslave blacks and Indians, burn heretics, join Hitler's army, or kill women and children in free-fire zones? Will it be enough when we meet the Lord to claim that "the pope made us do it"? (Actually, if someone sincerely believed he was doing the right thing lighting Joan of Arc's fire, he is probably in heaven with the rest of the dead-wrong, dutiful Inquisitors, but I don't like to concede this point in argument.)

Recently, my understanding, if not my arguing ability, has been sharpened by reading John E. Thiel's book, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2000). Catholics, Thiel claims, do not collapse tradition into Scripture and so must grant that tradition has its own integrity as a source of revelation. Tradition in its plain literal sense includes all the formal written decrees of councils, encyclicals, etc., but also all of the practices that are handed down in the church. In addition, there are three other senses or ways to interpret a complex tradition—just as there are different senses of Scripture. Today, Catholics have no problem accepting that there can exist more than one literal interpretation of a scriptural text: Scripture can be read in an allegorical, mystical, or moral sense that complements the plain meaning of the inspired texts. In much the same way tradition can be interpreted in more than its plain literal sense.

Thiel points to three more dynamic senses of tradition. One is a development-in-continuity sense, as doctrines change while being appropriated anew by each generation. (This constant re-appropriation seems to give meaning to the wonderful term "neo-past.") But two other senses of tradition provide for more radical reform and renewal. One sense is what Thiel calls dramatic development which includes discontinuity, reversals, even extinctions. Like the dinosaurs, some firmly entrenched teachings have vanished. Since Vatican II, doctrines barring the exercise of religious liberty or declarations of no salvation outside the church are gone, if not forgotten. Another more intriguing dimension of tradition leading to renewal is an incipient, anticipatory sense of development, in which new insights begin to emerge among some marginal minority and point where the universal church is going. Only time can tell whether something novel, local, and contested will become part of the universal consensus. Wellsprings of feminist, liberation, or ecological theology may be anticipating the church's future direction.

I find the affirmation of a dynamic plural movement of the Holy Spirit through time and culture to be true to the Gospels and to the chaos and complexity of history. A certain disorder accompanies creative change. While all interpretations of tradition yearn for the Spirit's one truth in a whole coherent network, Christians should not pretend to possess some narrow, false, Platonic ideal. This side of the eschaton the Spirit pours forth living waters, filled with novelty. The present challenge is to make wise discernments. After all, the canons become canonical and constant by the lived assent of the Spirit working within the faithful. When lack of assent begins to appear, it may not indicate heresy or apostasy, but herald dramatic development. Christian truth is not an inert lump deposit, but a rich multithematic symphony played out through time. More is coming. More can be expected. Trust the One who makes all things new, sometimes known as She Who Is. □

In keeping with **Commonweal**'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated July 13.

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E.J. DIONNE Jr.

THE NEVER-ENDING TAX BILL

Check the expiration date

George W. Bush's big tax cut is now a reality. So you know what will happen when the president wants to oppose new spending—say, more money to help the elderly buy prescription drugs. The White House line will be: "Sorry, we don't have the money."

The response should be: "What do you mean *we*, Mr. President?"

The money to solve social problems and keep the budget in balance was certainly there when Bush took office. Now, a large chunk of the budget surplus is committed to the most deceptive tax cut ever passed by any Congress.

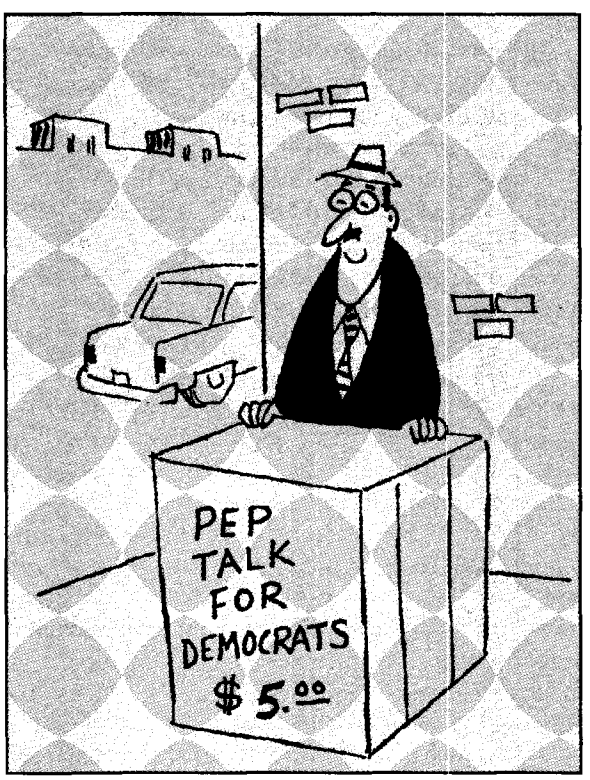
To pretend the tax cut is smaller than it is, our brilliant legislators made it expire at the end of 2010. Kaput. It's gone. Theoretically, all the rates go back up after that.

Creating this entirely artificial expiration date meant that Congress could pretend it passed a $1.35-trillion tax cut when, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, it's really a $1.9-trillion tax cut. If you count interest on the national debt that won't be paid off as a result of this bill, the true cost will be $2.3 trillion over the next eleven years.

But aren't average Americans getting the bulk of this money? They're not. True, the bill does create a new 10 percent bracket on the first $12,000 of income for married couples. But the 15 percent tax rate, paid by couples on earnings up to $45,000, is not cut at all.

"Who are the families singled out for virtually no tax cut in this bill?" asked Senator Jean Carnahan (D-Mo.) who sought unsuccessfully to cut the 15 percent rate. "These are Americans who are working the late-night shift at the factory. These are cops on the beat. These are American moms and dads working two jobs to save to send their kids to college."

Carnahan nonetheless voted for the tax measure, whose biggest rate cuts go to taxpayers earning more than $300,000.



"I cannot in good conscience support a tax cut in which so many of the benefits go to the most fortunate among us, at the expense of middle-class Americans who most need tax relief," said Arizona Senator John McCain, one of two Republicans with the courage to vote no.

And then there is the road not taken. "The emergence of federal surpluses has presented America with an unprecedented opportunity to make some desperately needed investments in our economy," said Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, the other Republican who voted against the bill. "While we can debate which investments are of the highest priority, we should not squander this historic opportunity to address some of our nation's chronic problems."

We don't have to. McCain-Chafee Republicans should join with Democrats to resolutely reject the political logic this tax bill is designed to impose.

If Congress passes a prescription-drug benefit and its opponents say "we can't afford it," Congress can declare a moratorium on the tax cut until it's clear the drug benefit is paid for. If the president proposes Medicare or Social Security cuts because we face deficits, Congress can say there would be no deficits without these tax cuts and reject the president's plans.

And if the president eventually proposes a big defense buildup, Congress can say no to all exotic new weapons systems until he explains how they'll be paid for without breaking the budget. Bush delayed his defense plan until after his tax cut passed, and for this year, at least, the White House is proposing a relatively modest supplemental appropriation for the Pentagon.

McCain said he feared an excessive tax cut "would restrict our ability to fund necessary increases in defense spending." If Bush didn't want an open debate about priorities before his tax cut became law, that's no reason not to have it now.

This tax bill is so incoherent that it will have to be revisited. That may be its one and only virtue. Just this time, I'll agree with the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page (May 30), which rarely meets a tax cut for the wealthy it doesn't like: "Some of the tax bill phases in so slowly as to be imperceptible, some of it phases out so dramatically as to be neck-snapping...and all of it vanishes in nine years unless Congress waves its wand over the whole thing."

That's why the fight over this terrible bill did not end with its passage. The fight is just beginning. □

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Brian Doyle

DALAI LAMA IN OREGON

Will China retaliate?

His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, the man considered to be the manifestation of Chenrezig, the Boddhisatva of Compassion, the leader of millions of Buddhists, and the head of state of a state that is and isn't a state, exactly, has the sloping shoulders of a halfback and the headlong bowlegged shamble of a bear. His gaze is intense and his crewcut is so short that you want to rub his head as soon as you see him up close, although this is frowned upon by tradition and the very tall State Department agents who hover near him at all times, the Dalai Lama being the head of a state and all.

The Dalai Lama used to be a boy named Lhamo Dhondup, from the little town of Roaring Tiger in Tibet, but when he was two years old he was "recognized as the reincarnation of his predecessor," as the Tibetans say carefully, and when he was four years old he assumed the throne of temporal and religious power in his nation. A few years later his nation was gone, eaten by its immense and hungry neighbor, and the boy who used to be Lhamo Dhondup fled across the mountains to India. Ever since he has been on the road, talking and teaching.

Recently his travels brought him to Oregon, where he sat on a cushion at the visitors' end of the basketball court at a Catholic university and addressed an audience of people of every religious stripe imaginable, including a Zoroastrian couple, a gaggle of rabbis, two long rows of priests, an abbot, a dozen nuns, and a man who said he was the head lama of his own sect, which did not yet have any other members, though he had hopes.

Before his holiness entered the arena proper he was ushered into a holding room at the university, a room where its athletic heroes are enshrined with mammoth wall plaques. "Who are these famous people?" he asked. "Football stars, mostly," he was told. "Ah, America," said his holiness.

"Too much ideas and ambition make you mad," he said to the president of the Catholic university. "That's why a university with a spiritual context is a very good thing. A warm heart is more important than anything, isn't that so?"

"I couldn't agree more," said the president of the Catholic university.

Once inside the basketball arena his holiness bowed to all in sight and they bowed back, and the crowd stood silent and reverential for a long moment. The absolute silence of thousands of people is a stunning thing. Then he mounted a little platform and folded himself onto his cushion and began to rock back and forth gently for two hours, during which time he talked pretty much continuously, in English for a while and then for a long time in Tibetan, his patient and gentle-voiced translator trying to keep up with his holiness's thought, which was quicksilver and ranged far afield.

"Whenever I give a large teaching, I always make clear that it is safer to follow your own traditions, rather than change to another tradition," he said. "There's less confusion. Here in the West I do not think it advisable to follow Buddhism. Changing religions is not like changing professions. Excitement lessens over the years, and soon you are not excited, and then where are you? Homeless inside yourself.

"I will switch to Tibetan now, thank you. Sometimes when I speak in English, not only do I confuse you, but I have no idea what I am saying.

"Love and compassion are common to all faith traditions. Compassion for all sentient beings made by your creator, this is integral to Christianity. Christians strive to fulfill the wishes of your creator, and the primary wish of your creator is love, is that not so? The Buddha and the Christ were similar men: ascetics, men used to hardship and not to luxury, men of perseverance and effort, extraordinary teachers. And indeed such hardship and ascetic practice are common to all the great spiritual teachers of the world. Yet now we seem to believe that our intellectual progress has advanced us past the great teachers of the past; we seem to believe we are superior to the simple teachers of long ago. But this is a mistake on our part."

At this point a small girl ran up to one of the State Department agents, who bent down from her great height to listen, and then the agent smiled and gently shook her head no and the girl ran back to her seat. The agent said later that the girl had asked if she could speak to the lama alone now.

His holiness had a great many other things to say and he said them at great length, even devoting nearly an hour to explicating the single line, "all things arise from their causes," which seemed painfully clear to a number of people in the audience before his holiness was quite done worrying it to death, but finally the Dalai Lama's two allotted hours in the gym drew to a close and so did his peroration.

"All things are transient," concluded his holiness suddenly, and there came a great silence. He rocked back and

"...and this one is for walking the fine line— defending Taiwan and not offending China."

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forth on his cushion. "Things change moment to moment, things are impermanent. We worry over the past, we anticipate the future, and we barely perceive a shred of the passing moment. But all of us of every faith tradition possess the possibility of pure light, is that not so? The question of who we are is very much open." □

Brian Doyle *is the editor of* Portland Magazine *at the University of Portland, and the author most recently of* Credo *(Saint Mary's Press).*

John Kelsay

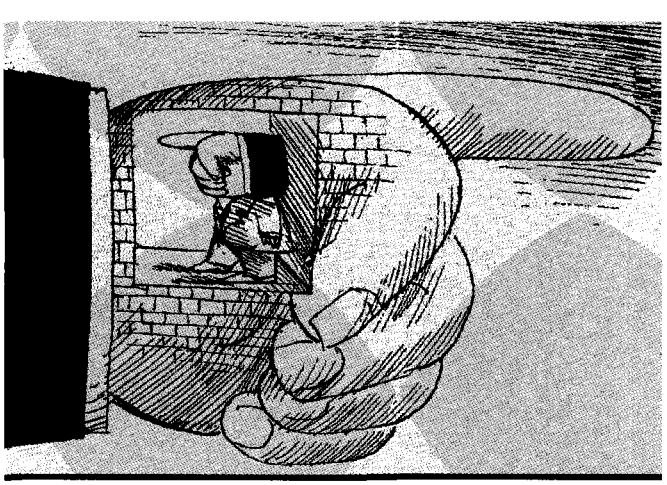
DENOUNCING THE JEWS

What Syria's Assad is up to

When John Paul II visited Syria last month, an eager President Bashar al-Assad greeted him with a call for Christians to join forces with Muslims against Jews. International response was swift, and focused on questions about the pope's response (or lack thereof) and its import for Jewish-Christian relations.

As important as such discussion is, those who focus too narrowly on issues between Jews and Christians are missing something of the significance of Assad's "invitation." The Syrian leader has his own political context, and his own reasons for speaking as he did. To put it bluntly: his speech was heard not only by the pope, and those engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue. It echoed loudly in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. By speaking as he did, the Syrian president put Jordan's King Abdullah and Egypt's Prime Minister Hosni Mubarak between the proverbial rock of maintaining strong ties with the United States and the hard place of Arab public opinion. Political and religious leaders in the United States and elsewhere would do well to keep this in mind as they respond to Assad's anti-Semitism.

History is useful in considering his remarks. His father, Hafiz al-Assad, was a consummate practitioner of realpolitik. He always understood the precarious nature of his own power. A member of the tiny and (from the standpoint of most Muslims) heterodox Alawi sect, Hafiz had good reason to focus on Arab, rather than Muslim, solidarity. As a young man, Hafiz cast his lot with the Báathist movement, thus joining with those who proclaimed themselves ready to view all Arabs as equals. From this standpoint, Christians, Muslims, Druzes, and even Jews could be stakeholders in the modern Arab state. While Jews eventually fell out of the mix, this was less a matter of religious identity than of nationalist politics; from the Báathist standpoint, Jews were problematic because of their suspected ties to Israel. In Hafiz al-Assad's Syria, Christians in particular fared well. Intolerance was reserved for those (such as Jews) viewed as a threat to security, or those who challenged the legitimacy of a state defined in terms of Arab unity (for example, the Muslim Brotherhood.)



Hafiz al-Assad remained loyal to the Báathist ideology until his death. In this, he resisted the movement toward Islamic revivalism that began to take root following Israel's victory in the 1967 war. One by one, the great leaders of Báathism died off. When they did, a new generation, attuned to Islamic solidarity, stood ready to fill the void. And thus Bashar al-Assad assumed the father's post, but with the distinctive outlook of his own generation. Like his peers, the younger Assad looks to Islam as the solution to modernity's ills. He is less interested in pan-Arabism, more keen on the solidarity of Muslims. For him, political reality, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, is read in terms of religion rather than of nationalist politics.

Why then the appeal to Christians? First, consider the internal politics of Syria. Christians have prospered there. They are a force with which the new leader must reckon, even as he speaks of Muslim solidarity.

Second, consider Islamic tradition, which has strong views on the relations among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. In particular, the Syrian president's comments concerning Jewish resistance to divine principles, to Jews betraying and torturing Jesus, and to Jews attempting to betray Muhammad, refer to the Qur'an and the biography of Muhammad. At the same time, the appeal to Christians reflects a more positive view of the role of "the people of the Messiah" in salvation history. That, too, is related to the biography of the Prophet, which relates that Christians early on gave protection to Muslims seeking asylum from their enemies. A leader like Assad, knowing these basic sources of Islamic tradition, is perfectly capable of making analogies to his own political context. However partial such interpretations may be (and, given that the Qur'an promises salvation to all who do good—Jews, Christians, and Muslims), the repetition of Assad's rhetoric by Syrian religious and political leaders during the pope's visit suggests a deliberate appropriation of Islamic sources.

Third, consider the broader field of Arab politics. Since the founding of Israel in 1948, Arabs have considered the plight of the Palestinians a major challenge to Western lead-

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ership in the international community. For Arabs, the Palestinians are victims *par excellence*, having suffered the loss of property, restrictions on liberty, and loss of life. From this point of view, the most poignant questions of international relations have to do with why the West remains indifferent to such suffering.

In response, some Arabs have become cynical. They argue that Israel is a kind of Western "plant," and that the real aim of the West is to fulfill the goal of the medieval Crusaders. Talk of democracy and human rights is thus merely a cover for imperial goals, including the elimination of Islam as a force in human affairs.

The majority of Arabs believe, however, that Western indifference to Palestinian suffering is a matter of ignorance. For these, the great task is to educate the West; they assume that the cause is clearly just, and that those who speak the language of democracy and human rights cannot fail to act, once the facts are known. From this point of view, it must be said that the current round of violence in the West Bank and Gaza poses an enormous challenge. That the West could stand idly by, even as CNN makes Palestinian suffering visible as never before, is incredible to many Arabs.

And thus, when Assad spoke, his audience was also the people and leaders of Jordan and Egypt. He knows how far King Abdullah and Prime Minister Mubarak have gone in seeking closer ties with the United States. He knows that they have done so in the name of economic development, and that the quid pro quo has been peaceable relations with Israel. He knows, further, that his own claim to leadership in the region involves competition with Abdullah and Mubarak for moral leadership, especially in terms of the contest with Israel.

In March at the Arab summit, Assad characterized Zionism as more racist than Nazism. Such rhetoric is one part of an attempt to compel others to follow. Given the attention paid to his more recent comments, Assad has now increased the pressure. In particular, Abdullah and Mubarak are placed in a precarious position. The grotesque nature of the Syrian leader's "invitation" will, no doubt, give rise to international pressure for other Arab and Muslim leaders to disassociate themselves from Assad. Such pressure will, in turn, give rise to domestic calls for these leaders to free themselves from Western influence, and to pledge solidarity with Syria and the Palestinians. In this context, the preferred approach of Abdullah and Mubarak will be to keep silent, their eyes fixed on the prize of economic development. Should the pressure to denounce Assad grown strong enough, they will face an uninviting choice. And given past history, one may predict that domestic politics will outweigh the benefits of U.S. support. In view of these facts, it would be prudent for leaders in Washington, in Israel, and elsewhere to proceed with care, since even a temporary turn inward by Jordan and Egypt will have serious international consequences. □

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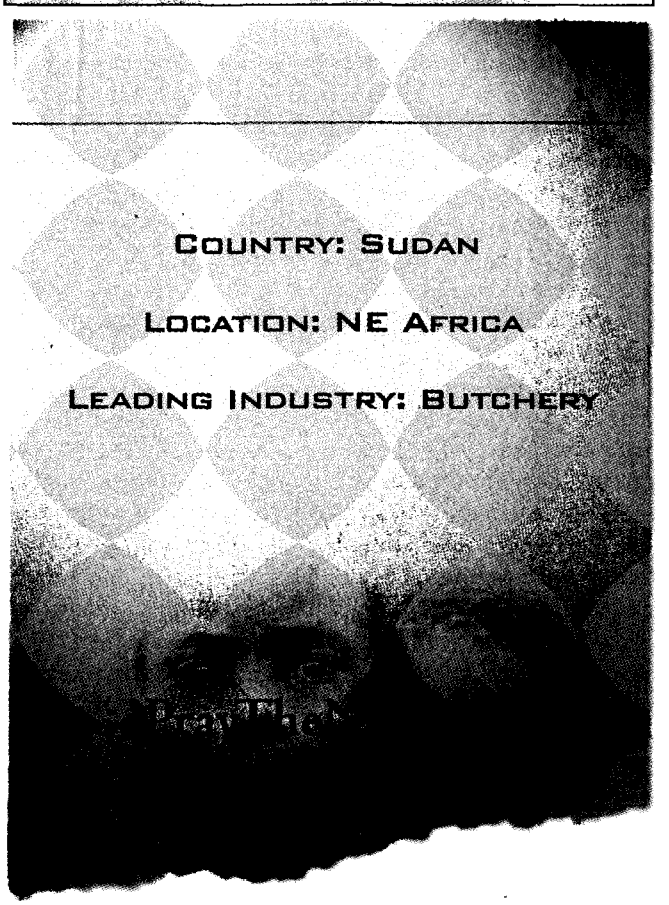

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PRESCRIPTION FOR TROUBLE

Why drug prices keep exploding

Christopher F. Koller

Consider Walter. At seventy, he has a history of high blood pressure, heart trouble, high cholesterol, stomach pains, and seasonal allergies. He used to smoke but gave it up a while back. He is only moderately overweight. For his various ailments, Walter has a variety of prescriptions from his doctor. His real problem, however—as for 26 percent of his fellow Americans, particularly the elderly, those most in need of medications—is that Walter has no insurance coverage for his medications. Medicare does not provide it.

Drug coverage makes a real difference in people's lives, for two reasons. Those who have it use prescriptions at a 50-percent higher rate than those without it, presumably to their benefit; and people without it spend on average $220 *more* per year for the few drugs they do get. Combine these facts and you have a recipe for not only moral but political outrage. Hence the increased attention being paid to a drug benefit for those on Medicare.

Yet there is something else at work here. Only eleven years ago, the percentage of Americans with no drug coverage was almost twice as high (48 percent) as it is today. By most measures of equity, then, things have gotten better: more people have coverage, and—for advocates of smaller government, something even more positive—this improvement has come about through private health insurance.

So why has drug coverage become a national issue? In 1999, $100 billion was spent on prescription drugs in the United States—8.3 percent of the total health-care ticket. By 2010, that figure is expected to rise to $366 billion (14 percent of total expenses). This works out to a predicted average annual growth rate of 11.3 percent for the next nine years—more than twice the growth rate of the country's economy as a whole. (Last year alone, spending for prescription drugs rose a stunning 18.8 percent.) The real problem we are facing, therefore, is providing not simply prescription-drug coverage but the total bill for such expenses. And this reality is finally registering with American consumers, previously shielded from the real costs of such services. Naturally, the first to feel it are uninsured, high utilizers—namely, the elderly.

Christopher F. Koller *is CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, a health plan serving Medicaid enrollees based in Providence. He is regular* Commonweal *contributor (and is blessed with a bare medicine cabinet).*

Every drama needs its shadowy character, and in this story the pharmaceutical industry is ripe for the role. Under increasing scrutiny, "big pharma" is reaping what it has sown. Through the 1990s, it grew at an average of 12.5 percent per year—two and one-half times the rate of the economy as a whole—and posted profits between 15 and 20 percent, making it one of the most profitable businesses around. The industry achieved this growth by delivering new hope to people, by securing political protection for itself, and by exploiting the vulnerabilities of both patients and an insurance-based payment system that inured customers to price sensitivity.

How much can Americans afford to pay for their medications? Who benefits from the growth of the prescription-drug industry? Might consumers trade slower pharmaceutical innovation for lower costs and broader coverage? To explore these issues, let's return to Walter, our chronically unwell subject.

The accompanying table (see page 13) illustrates the range Walter might pay for his drug regime, depending on the drugs prescribed and his insurance coverage. The table also serves to illustrate the difficulties associated with resource allocation in health care, particularly how to balance social benefit and individual need.

The table is based on generally accessible and accurate (but hardly definitive) information on drug pricing estimates, as they relate to the theoretical treatment of Walter's particular symptoms. Depending on insurance coverage, Walter could end up paying as little as nothing, or as much as $911 for his ninety-day course of drugs. The "system costs" (that is, the revenues to the drug companies) could range

"Old people won't have to choose between food and prescription drugs again—we're introducing an edible bottle!"

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Approximate Costs for 90-Day Supply

Symptoms/ Condition	Medicine	Private Insurance		Medicaid		Medicare
		Patient	*Company*	*Patient*	*State*	*(all paid by patient)*
Stomach Pains/ Heartburn	Prilosec	$10	$273	0	$201	$336
	Ranitidine	$5	$119	0	$92	$141
Hypertension	Accupril	$10	$94	0	$67	$112
	Atenolol	$5	$6	0	$2	$4
High Cholesterol	Lescol	$10	$137	0	$99	$183
Allergic Rhinitis (runny nose)	Claritin	$10	$232	0	$168	$280
	Semprex	$10	$66	0	$46	$78
Maximum paid		$40	$736	0	$535	$911
Minimum paid		$30	$328	0	$239	$406

SOURCE: AUTHOR'S RESEARCH OF AVERAGE WHOLESALE PRICE (AWP) AND STANDARD INDUSTY DISCOUNTS AND COPAYMENTS.

from $239 to $911, based on what is prescribed and who pays. A look at the table also indicates that there are few other markets for goods and services where product pricing varies so significantly, and largely to the benefit of the seller. Nonuniversal, third-party coverage compounds this issue by exposing some people to full costs while insulating other consumers from any sort of price sensitivity.

There are six elements at play in the pharmaceutical industry which contribute not only to its growth but also to the pressures it puts on the financing and delivery of health care in general.

- **Product Development** The key to growth in the pharmaceutical industry is the introduction of new products. Drug companies are masters at creating such innovations. They spent $25 billion in 1999—a whopping 25 percent of sales—on research and development. Their production pipeline is full of future products targeted for widespread chronic conditions like Walter's—heart disease, depression, and arthritis—where utilization will be high and sustained. It is estimated that 46 percent of the rate of increase in prescription-drug spending each year comes from the introduction of new products. Companies search for blockbuster drugs that will deliver new benefits to patients and that will sustain their research and development programs. Of the $21 billion increase in spending for prescription drugs from 1999 to 2000, one-half was due to increased sales of just twenty-three individual drugs.

- **Marketing** Once a drug is developed, it is marketed intensively to differentiate it from its competition. In 1999, pharmaceutical companies spent more than $10 billion on marketing activities. Over 80 percent of this outlay was directed at physicians, trying to get them to recognize when to prescribe, and then to recommend a particular brand of drug. Company "detailers" (sales people) aggressively court doctors with information and entertainment. And marketing works. Between 1993 and 1998, sales of the ten most heavily marketed drugs contributed to more than one-fifth of the total increase in drug expenditures.

Yet the benefits of these blockbuster drugs are often overstated. Four out of five of Walter's conditions can be treated with much cheaper regimens of generally similar efficacy. There is, however, little incentive in the health system for doctors not to prescribe the latest thing, once it is proven safe and effective. Furthermore, today's fastest-growing marketing effort is direct-to-consumer advertising—getting *patients* to ask a physician for Claritin for a runny nose because they saw Joan Lunden recommend it on television. First permitted on television four years ago, consumer advertising was a $2.5 billion ticket in the year 2000. Such advertising campaigns offer only partial information about the products to the consumer, yet he or she can exert effective pressure on a physician to write a particular prescription.

- **Differential Pricing and Cost Responsibility** In a typical market, price is based on the consumer's perceived value of a particular good or service. But in pharmaceuticals, the consumer is not the only purchaser. His or her insurance plan also plays a part, and this has had the unintended consequence of contributing significantly to price insensitivity for pharmaceuticals—all the while enhancing the industry's profits. As Walter's table indicates, third-party insurance coverage has created significant opportunities for differential pricing by the industry, again resulting in increased revenues. By law, Medicaid gets the lowest price, but uninsured individual consumers may end up paying a retail price typically almost twice that of Medicaid.

If the market can't arrive at a fair or consistent price, is there some other workable mechanism? Efforts at price controls, common in Canada and Europe, are anathema in the United States. Every other major developed country employs some form of aggressive price and utilization control in its pharmaceutical program—whether as the provider of national health insurance or as a matter of industrial policy. (These include individual or product-group price controls, profit caps, monitoring the prescribing patterns of doctors, establishing national formularies, and patient cost sharing). The results are significant: per capita spending for

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prescription drugs in other major developed countries is 70 percent of the U.S. total—and growing at a slower rate. No wonder stories abound about Americans making shopping trips to Canada to purchase cheaper medicines. The U.S. pharmaceutical industry maintains that price controls in other countries force U.S. consumers to shoulder a disproportionate share of future product and development costs. But the industry is silent when it comes to whether Americans pay a greater share of its profits. The global reach of the industry may present an occasion for a global trade and industry policy.

- **Patent Protections** After a blockbuster drug is invented, marketed, and priced, a company works hard to protect its privileged position. Patent law exists to encourage innovation by preserving exclusivity and its benefits to the innovator for some time. The profits which accrue to the pharmaceutical industry, however, are truly extraordinary. Through diligent legislative activity, the industry has been able to more than double the potential effective patent life of a new drug, from 8.1 years in 1984 to 18.4 years in 2000. While not all drugs enjoy 18 years of exclusivity, the benefits of even six months of additional protection are considerable for a manufacturer, for once generic competition arrives on the market, prices can drop from 75 to 90 percent.

- **Political Spending** The pharmaceutical industry spent some $74 million for lobbying activities in 1998. The result? In addition to the patent protections noted above, federal tax credits for research resulted in the industry's massive profits being taxed at only 15 percent, almost half of the average corporate tax rate. In the recent presidential election, the industry contributed more than $6 million to the Bush campaign, and coughed up another $1.7 million for Bush's inaugural. Perhaps it is no surprise that an industry executive was named director of the Office of Management and Budget, or that three industry representatives served on the Department of Health and Human Services transition team—important positions from which to preserve current advantages and ensure that, for instance, a Medicare prescription-drug benefit proposal would steer away from governmental price controls.

- **The Technological Imperative** The last piece at work is probably the most difficult to harness: our collective desire for science to make our lives easier and to save us from our fears. The most important things Walter can do to help himself is to eat correctly, stay away from cigarettes, and get plenty of exercise and sleep. But these habits are hard to build and maintain. Virtue often loses to the quick fix promised by a pill, especially when it is cleverly marketed and the user does not directly pay for its full cost. Ultimately, of course, even good habits are no match for disease, let alone death. On the other hand, the benefits of medication, while not permanent, are incontestable. Still, we are guilty of a collective deceit when we let our faith in technology supplant a healthy respect for our bodies, both their strengths and their limitations. This deceit cannot be treated with a pill, and its results may be just as corrosive to the human spirit as any disease.

...the industry has no need for the protections it has been afforded legislatively in the form of excessive patent protection and tax credits.

None of this helps Walter directly when he is trying to figure out how to pay for Lescol so he can lower his cholesterol and reduce the risk of a heart attack. And though it may make sense for him to pay a share of his costs, few of us would be comfortable with the idea that access to an effective drug should be rationed based on the ability to pay, let alone proof of a person's exercise habits. How, then, do we get ourselves out of this mess?

The focus on prescription-drug coverage for the elderly is the best place to begin thinking about costs and coverage, for clearly the needs are real and, finally, it is federal policy that shapes the market for health care.

Currently, the only prescription-drug coverage options available for the elderly are retiree coverage for the lucky few; small state-based, sliding-scale programs; and Medicaid (for the impoverished). If actuarial estimates are correct, however, simply adding a full benefit for the elderly could raise program costs by 25 percent, an untenable prospect. How then do we close this gap between the real and growing needs of an aging population, and our ability to pay for those needs? Prescription drugs for the elderly thus become a more focused version of the larger dilemma raised by advocates of universal health insurance.

Current proposals break down less over the size of federal participation than over how allocation decisions get made; that is, the extent to which one believes the private market can and should work. The Bush administration's original "Immediate Helping Hand Program" called for an annual block grant of $12 billion to the states. This would provide for means-tested subsidies to the needy elderly for purchasing necessary drugs—augmenting what some states already have in place. After a period of denial over the need for any federal role, the pharmaceutical industry has embraced this approach as the least intrusive of potential evils. It is easily administrable and is philosophically compatible with a limited and preferably state-based governmental role. It also lets the private sector take care of health, starts to create a lower tier of care and financing for the elderly, and does nothing to address the fact that prescription-drug costs are driving the system as a whole.

For their part, advocates of a broader Medicare prescription-drug coverage have a hard time making the numbers work. Means testing for any Medicare benefit would reduce the cost burden, but is politically difficult, given Medicare

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is a universal entitlement. Some proposals call for a separate, privately administered prescription insurance program. Medicare enrollees could use a voucher to buy into different types of coverage in a newly created "market" of privately administered, government-certified drug benefit programs. These policy administrators would hammer out their best deals for enrollees with the manufacturers. But advocates for these private-sector purchasing techniques conveniently overlook the fact that it is the private health-insurance sector that has produced the 15–20 percent per year growth rates that now threaten the whole system.

Installing greater patient cost-sharing mechanisms to foster price sensitivity is one potential means of lowering medical expenditures. But such a program would have to be carefully administered, lest people forgo needed drugs because of the expense. Finally, reducing costs by limiting the extent of the benefit becomes dicey. Just imagine the reaction when the first elderly patient with the need for an excluded medicine shows up on the nightly news.

Reform of the present system, therefore, will require money and real political will. Still, almost anything would represent an improvement over what is currently in place for the elderly. Medicare prescription drug plans should follow some of the time-tested patterns already established by Medicare.

- First, coverage rules should apply to all. A safety-net type of program would represent a break from Medicare's commitment to equitable treatment. Medicare, along with Social Security, is the strongest example of social solidarity we have in the United States. It must be preserved.
- Second, we must get as comprehensive a benefit plan as we can afford. Half a loaf is better than none, but we have to make sure everyone gets it. Let those who can afford it buy a bigger loaf.
- Third, program operations must address the factors that have landed us in this fix. Federal purchasing or price controls for prescriptions should be instituted, as is already done for hospitals and physicians under the Medicare program. Admittedly, such price setting is ugly and inelegant, but it has worked for thirty-five years. For all their anti-market appearances, Medicare's physician and hospital fees are the standard reference metrics used throughout the private health-care industry. In addition, let Medicare recipients buy those drugs not covered under Medicare for the same price Medicaid pays. The industry will howl in protest, but it will adjust.
- Fourth, a Medicare prescription drug program should install effective and means-tested patient cost sharing at the point of consumption. This will encourage more price sensitivity. Patients need a limited incentive to weigh the costs and benefits of various treatments. For example, in Germany the first $20 of the cost of any prescription is covered by public insurance, but all costs above that are privately financed.
- Finally, we should acknowledge that pharmacy costs—the fastest-rising element in health care—are emblematic of our infatuation with the technological fix and unlimited choices. Proposals for prescription-drug coverage—and any other health-care coverage—must address a fundamental tectonic force at work: the proliferation of products and technologies that push costs upward. Particularly at a time when health-care utilization is likely to increase as the population ages and diagnostic technologies, often gene-based, improve, we should recognize that the industry has no need for the protections it has been afforded legislatively in the form of excessive patent protection and tax credits. Furthermore, no credible argument has been made that direct-to-consumer advertising for drugs does anything more than increase costs and create unrealistic and partially informed demands on physicians by patients.

In the end, health care is a supply-driven business: The more options our friend Walter has, the more he will use. The unchallenged assumption is that the more we use, the better off we are. That assumption must be questioned. But the prescription drug industry has embraced that paradigm and profited immensely from it. At the same time, the commercial insurance sector has failed to control prescription costs, assuming, as we all have, that the benefits provided are worth the expense. How much different would our lives be, however, if lower industry profits and fewer legislative protections meant less capital for research and slower product development cycles? Can the American public learn to love last year's antihistamine if it means that Walter can get most of his medication paid for? □

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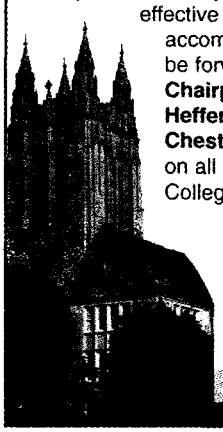

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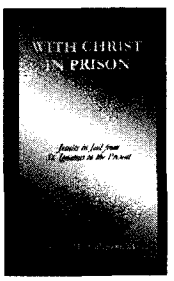

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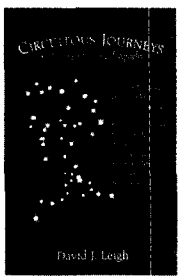

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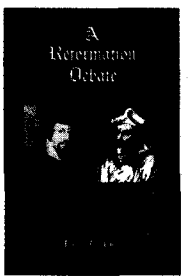

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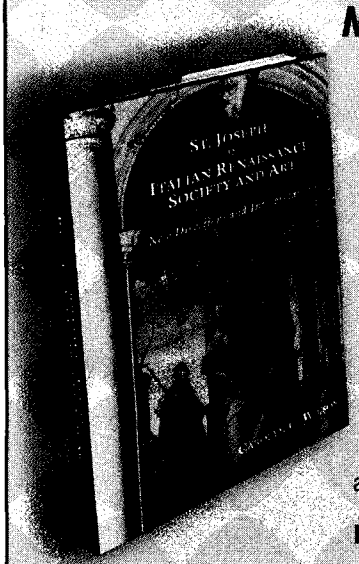

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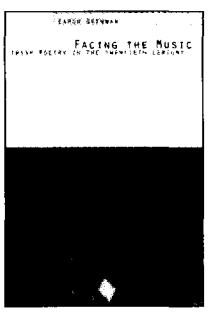

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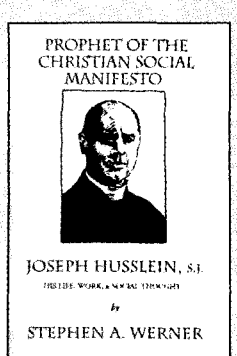

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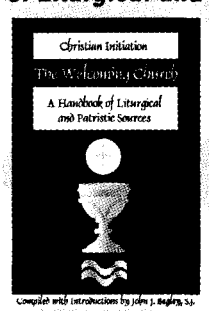

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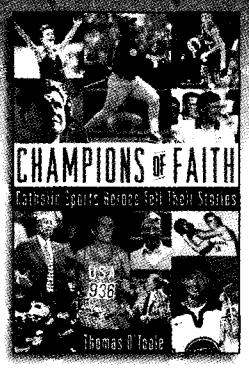

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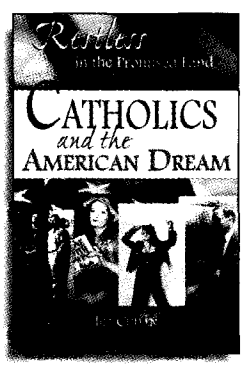

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CULTURE WATCH

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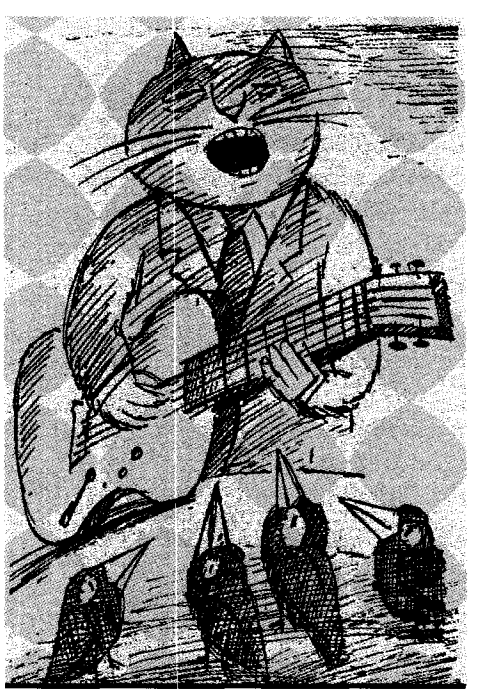
THE RAP ON 'RAP'

Yo, where's the melody?

In his article, "Yo Comma Dog" (*New Yorker*, March 12), about the illegal gun possession trial of Sean "Puffy" Combs, Adam Gopnik makes a statement that is both indelibly phrased and indisputably true: "Hip-hop remains the pig in the python of American culture—the indisputably new thing that refuses to get digested." But in speculating about why this is so, Gopnick can only advance a theory that he himself finds inadequate: "Rap and its artists just can't get a break from the watchdogs of the white middle classes: the cops and the critics both take them too literally." Gopnik rightly dismisses this idea, because the police can't help paying attention to "guns going off in people's faces." As for the critics, "highbrow resistance to rap long ago crumbled—the *Times* is much kinder to Eminem than it ever was to Billy Joel."

But if it's not a matter of irrational cops or finger-wagging critics, why don't the python's digestive juices work? Why is the pig still protruding?



Is it because of the hoodlum lifestyles of the rappers? Though only the hardcore gangsta rappers get into the big, homicidal messes, it's hard not to be leery of a subculture in which a West Coast-East Coast feud produces the dead bodies of Tupac Shakur and Christopher Wallace (aka Notorious B.I.G.). But are the other branches of show business even relatively pristine? Sport has its O.J. and numerous football and basketball stars taking dope and beating up girlfriends. As for actors and film directors...let's see, where do I begin...or end? Roman Polanski, River Phoenix, Gig Young, Michael Jackson, John Belushi, and now (perhaps) Robert Blake, among many others, have contributed to a show-biz rogues' gallery. Yet neither the world of sport nor the products of Hollywood constitute an "indigestible lump" in our culture. No, we'll have to look elsewhere than in police files to discover why an entire entertainment genre remains suspect.

Is it the sheer obscenity of rap lyrics? Again, we are mostly talking about gangsta rap, with its ethos of urban despair, greed, misogyny, and vengefulness. Gangsta obscenity certainly prevents it from being piped into nice restaurants and business-building elevators and, to that extent, does quarantine itself from the middle class. But do cuss words and depicted bloodbaths keep the action-film genre from being absorbed by the general film-going audience? And, since a lot of non-gangsta rap lyrics are surprisingly benign, why are all rappers still kept at a certain distance from the mainstream audience despite enormous popularity and fi-

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nancial success?

Is it because rap is so firmly embedded in black culture while American culture, on the whole, is white, middle-class in its orientation? But is the first half of that statement still true? The most reviled (as well as one of the most successful) of rappers is Eminem, the avatar of strictly white trailer-trash culture. Furthermore, white middle-class boys in their teens are the main consumers of rap. But, given that fact, how strange it is that more movies and television ads don't feature rap on their soundtracks. In the 1950s, the Tin Pan Alley style of songs sung by the likes of Frank Sinatra and Patty Paige was used in any ad that needed music, and in the 1960s through the 1990s, rock was the sound of choice. Rap has made certain inroads in advertising and onto movie soundtracks by now, of course, but it by no means achieves the ubiquity that rock and Tin Pan Alley used to enjoy. Maybe the reason for rap's ambiguous place in our culture—wildly successful yet definitely suspect—can be found in facts so obvious, so close to the surface of things, that we ignore them because of their very obviousness.

What is the most striking thing about popular culture? Its inescapability. It invades our lives even when we want to keep it out. I never watched the TV show "Welcome Back, Kotter" but couldn't escape its characters, the "sweathogs," because their faces were printed on the lunch boxes held by the little kids who shared a bus with me every morning as I went to teach drama classes in downtown Washington, D.C. Similarly, I didn't see *Star Wars* when it first came out but, within three months of its release, I knew the names of all the main characters, their relationships and motivations, and the overall plot. How did I come by this knowledge? I'm not sure, but I did.

Movie characters and sequences don't stay on the big screen. "Seinfeld" wisecracks were repeated at workplaces the morning after each episode. Comic strip characters don't remain within their panels but become thirty feet high on billboards and one inch small on postage stamps. Rock 'n' roll songs that were played on jukeboxes in the 1950s sold cars on TV advertisements in the 1980s and 1990s. If high culture is a quiet place you go to, pop culture is the air you breathe and the microscopic insects in that air that dig under your skin.

Now, what is the single feature of pop music that launches it, unbidden, into your unconscious? The tune. You are walking down the street and suddenly find yourself humming or whistling a tune. You don't decide to do this, it happens to you. Melody isn't necessarily an indispensable feature of all music, for no one whistles a tune from *La Mer* or *Pierrot Lunaire*, and currents and countercurrents of rhythm and tempo that are the driving forces of jazz. But, as far as pop music goes, the unforgettable tune (whether you want to forget it or not) is the hypodermic needle that injects the song into your consciousness.

Rap is the first popular music in the history of popular culture to forgo the pop tune. Oh, rap uses tunes all right, but these "samples" are often fragments of previously recorded hits from jazz, rock, soul, whatever, that are borrowed ("sampled") to form the background of the rapper's rap. Melody dances attendance on the spiel. Therefore, rap—whatever the artistic quality of the individual number—is closer to poetry than to music. It is poetry underpinned by music but, remember, the earliest poetry was always supported by music.

That rap numbers (I hesitate to call them songs) don't lodge themselves—as music—in the memory and, therefore, don't spring unbidden to the lips, is probably a point in their favor for rebellious kids who don't want to share their sound with the world. It is, after all, the huge enclave of youth that has made rap's huge popularity. No enclave, even if it's international, however, can propel entertainment into the sort of intergenerational acceptance that has, up to now at least, allowed popular entertainment eventually to become classic entertainment (Dickens, Italian opera, Chaplin, a lot of rock). Then again, isn't it just a matter of today's kids growing older and carrying rap with them into their adulthood? Isn't this just a case of the "trash" of

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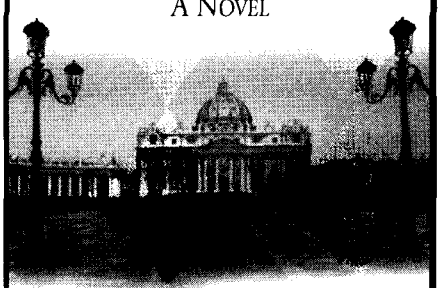

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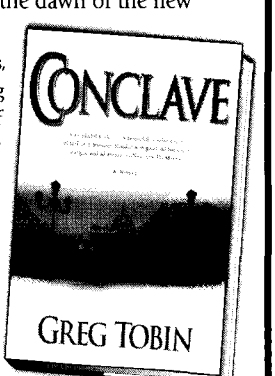

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today becoming the gold of tomorrow?

No. Not as rap now exists. We always forget how much of yesterday's roughhouse entertainment lived down to the low expectations of disapproving oldsters and really did fall by the wayside just as they said it would, even as some other entertainments, equally rambunctious and equally castigated, transcended the initial controversies and became classics. Chaplin lives but not Ben Turpin, perhaps because Ben and his bug-eyed specialty were tiresome to begin with but it took time for the tiresomeness to become evident. The Beatles are now being listened to (with rapture) by my ten-year-old daughter, but she sure isn't grooving to Fabian or Frankie Avalon. Those two boys were plastic dolls and, like most toys, were soon flung on the rubbish heap of pop culture. Rap, a quasi-musical form created not by composers but by disc jockeys like Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash, may be particularly vulnerable to the inroads of time because so many rap numbers—chaste or obscene, frivolous or political—tend to be formulaic concoctions instead of outpourings from the heart. And verbal concoctions turn to dust faster than melodic ones.

That said, I must now admit that I'm surprisingly sanguine about the future of rap (surprising to myself!) because I now see rap quickly changing, with the desire of its fans for real music beginning to break loose. The simple need to have a song in your head is unquenchable, and kids may just possibly be coming to feel that the in-your-face didactic hectoring of an L.L.Cool J isn't much different from the hectoring of their teachers and parents, even when the rap preachment is done with four-letter words. The huge success of Shaggy's version of the old rock number, "Angel," may be a weather vane. Here, melody returns to the foreground, sharing it with Shaggy's rap, which laces itself about the tune like a vine spreading over a trellis. The melody isn't "sampled" but allowed its full arc, with the rap providing genuine counterpoint and taking on a catchiness all its own. Counterpoint! The backbone of Western music!? In rap!?!?!?!?!? □

STAGE

Celia Wren

SPRINGTIME FOR BROADWAY

'The Producers,' '42nd Street,' & 'Stones in His Pockets'

Like Genghis Khan across the Asian steppes, like the tulip in seventeenth-century Holland, like J.K. Rowling on the shelves of juvenilia, Mel Brooks's *The Producers* has rampaged onto Broadway, strewing headlines in its wake. With high-profile stars Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick cast in the leads, the show (which is based on Brooks's 1968 movie and features a book by Brooks and Thomas Meehan) had nearly overwhelmed theatrical buzz circuits long before it opened in April. Then, the day after New York reviewers had chimed in on the hilarity of the script and songs (music and lyrics by Brooks); the cast's impeccable acting; and the pitch-perfect touches by director Susan Stroman, the production broke box-office records, generating more than $3 million in ticket sales in one day. It then went on to win an unprecedented twelve Tony Awards, including best musical.

Everything has gone right, in short, for the producers of *The Producers*, a musical about producers who conspire to make everything go wrong. In this wicked spoof, the less-than-scrupulous impresario Max Bialystock (Lane) hooks up with a shy accountant (Broderick) in an ingenious scheme: create the worst show ever, raise funds like mad for it, and pocket the surplus money when the play flops—a cinch, the duo thinks once they've cooked up *Springtime for Hitler*, a musical about *Der Führer* himself.

Curtains for Poland & France

Stroman's production is decked from start to finish with brilliant gags (one may as well pay tribute here to the already much-remarked-upon mechanical Nazi pigeons), many of the best of them poking fun at theatrical history and show-biz clichés—the Busby Berkeley-style choreographed human swastika, the chorus line of hobbling, sex-starved little old ladies, etc. Two blocks away, the revival of the 1980s hit *42nd Street* is billing itself as "The Broadway musical for people who love Broadway musicals." *The Producers* has the advantage of appealing to that crowd plus all the people who'd prefer to think they hate Broadway musicals.

The Producers and *42nd Street* aren't the only musicals-about-musicals to parachute into New York recently. Early April saw the much-trumpeted opening of *Follies*, a revival of Stephen Sondheim's legendary elegy on lost innocence and the history of musical theater. Linda Kline and Lonny Price's *A Class Act* attempts to fish from obscurity the story of composer and lyricist Edward Kleban. And critics have proclaimed the Off-Broadway musicals *Batboy* and *Urinetown* (yes, you read those names right) to be sly tributes to the form's conventions.

Overinterpretation is a hazard here, but the themes of these shows do seem to echo the self-consciousness and nostalgia that have plagued the genre in recent years. Angst runs rampant in the field that once forged *Oklahoma* and now spawns *The Full Monty*. Why don't new projects with impressive artistic credentials—for example, last year's two adaptations of the Jazz Age poem *The*

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Wild Party—earn the kind of audience loyalty that, say, the current revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* has? Why do philistines continually accuse contemporary theater composers of being unable to craft a good tune? Why do staged movies with celluloid hearts (*Saturday Night Fever, Footloose*) flourish despite critical pans? And what is the significance of Disney's sally into the arena (*The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast*), commanding the breadth of resources that might typify a villain in a James Bond film?

If Disney is Goliath, shows like *The Producers* and *A Class Act*, with their focus (however waggish) on individuals cobbling shows together from scratch, sling stones for David. Even *42nd Street*, about a glitzy spectacle mounted by a producer of Michael Eisner proportions, exults in the muse-courting abilities of creative men and women. Based on the plots of *42nd Street* and other 1930s films, with music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dubin (Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble wrote the book), the show takes the quintessential star-is-born story and inks in a lot of tap dancing and just enough characterization to give songs like "We're in the Money" and "Lullaby of Broadway" a narrative framework.

Said narrative follows the initiation of small-town naif Peggy Sawyer (tap-dancing phenomenon Kate Levering) into big-time show biz. Recruited by legendary producer Julian Marsh (the frosty Michael Cumpsty) for his new spectacular, Peggy finds herself taking over the lead at the last minute when petulant diva Dorothy Brock (Christine Ebersole) is injured. But *42nd Street*, which won the Tony for best musical revival, is less interested in personalities and plot twists than in the condition of being stage-struck. From Peggy's gotta-dance optimism to Julian Marsh's steely conviction ("Musical comedy: the most glorious words in the English language!"), the extravaganza exults in the passion that keeps a substantial subset of humanity signing up for Equity cards.

Compared to the inspired buoyancy of *The Producers*, *42nd Street* exudes a vague theme-park air; it always feels like a slightly sentimental re-creation of a re-creation—which is what it is. Still, you can't bear much ill will toward a theme park that's so gorgeously executed, thanks to director Bramble, set designer Douglas W. Schmidt, costumer Roger Kirk, and lighting designer Paul Gallo. Scenes like the "In the Money" number, in which the dancers cavort on (and off) huge silver dollars, or momentary tableaux like an arc of chorines whose costumes create a full rainbow, red through violet, across the stage, are truly dazzling. Although the datedness of the book and lyrics propels you toward a certain ironic detachment ("They're paying $4.40 a seat out there," one character announces solemnly of his audience), it's tempting to succumb to the vision. Getting your paychecks by singing and dancing—that's the way to live!

You get a more profound, and depressing, insight into the metamusical phenomenon if you turn to *Stones in His Pockets*, a work that actually has nothing to do with musicals. Marie Jones's play contains neither tunes nor tune-related narrative, but it makes a sweep-

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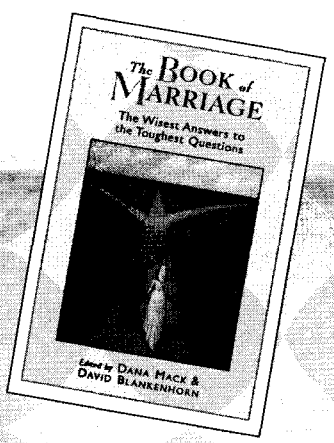

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ing critique of our addiction to entertainment in general—and it might as well be commenting on the Great White Way. *Stones* depicts a small Irish town that is invaded by a team of boorish Hollywood filmmakers. As the shooting progresses, the town's residents give themselves over to vicarious glamour, competing for work as extras and ogling the stars, apparently indifferent to the film's ersatz Celtic aesthetic ("He didn't like the cows; he said they don't look Irish enough," one local marvels after overhearing a comment by the director).

In Ian McElhinney's production, which originated in Belfast and subsequently became the toast of London, virtuoso actors Seán Campion and Conleth Hill play fifteen characters, including an officious, mincing, female assistant director (Campion, brushing imaginary tresses from his shoulder) and the screen siren Caroline (Hill, perpetually twisting an imaginary earring). With apparent effortlessness, the duo juggle voices and mannerisms, conjuring up a bustling world without the aid of set or costume changes and lending intensity to a script that can be distressingly slack (lopping off a third of the show's two and one-half hour length would greatly improve it).

Despite the often hilarious impersonations, *Stones in His Pockets* broadcasts a rather grim message: We succumb to pop culture—and narratives about the creation of pop culture—out of desperation. Jones's characters fixate on the movie set because the filmmakers seem to be doing something rewarding and meaningful—it's a way for the townspeople to distract themselves from the emptiness of their lives. One man who fails to talk his way onto the set, in fact goes on to commit suicide.

The modern world has placed so much emphasis on diversion, the play suggests, that entertainment has become a substitute for meaning. Stories about the making of entertainment (musicals, for example) have become mythic, but also addictive. It's not an idea you can take 100 percent seriously, or it would be impossible to get up in the morning, but it's something to think about while standing in line for *The Producers*. □

SCREEN

Rand Richards Cooper

BOMBS AWAY

'Pearl Harbor'

One way to see *Pearl Harbor* is as the opening salvo in this season's blockbuster wars—a consummate action film, all high-tech mayhem and bodies flying like popcorn. Another way to see it is as a crowning achievement in the effort to undo three decades of cinematic alienation and get the war movie genre back on the track of patriotic glory.

The crucial year for Vietnam-influenced war movies was 1970—the year of Kent State, and of *M*A*S*H* and *Catch-22*, two films that harnessed our agonized revulsion at Vietnam and turned it toward a revisionist scrutiny of earlier wars. War films that complicate or demystify military heroism predate Vietnam, of course. *From Here to Eternity* (1953) presented the army, that hugely messy democratizing institution, as war itself, a cauldron of class and ethnic tensions; *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954), with William Holden as a bomber pilot unable to square the violence of war with the prospect of his happy American family back home, portrayed Korea as "a tragedy" and "a dirty job." But these movies fell back in the end on affirmations, partly salvaging anti-heroic deaths (Montgomery Clift shot in a golf course sandtrap; Holden in a muddy ditch) with hero-making epitaphs of the kind Burt Lancaster utters in *Eternity* ("He was a good solider, sir. He loved the army more than any soldier I knew"). Even *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), which grafted a cynical Vietnam message onto WW II—that war is murder, dirty work we leave to society's "scum"—left you cheering for the boys to pull it off.

Abstinence-only training

*M*A*S*H* and *Catch-22*, however, obliterated heroism, pushing beyond cynicism into absurdity; and the antiwar war films to follow went further, into insanity. *Apocalypse Now, Coming Home, The Big Red One, Full Metal Jacket, Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July, The Thin Red Line*: the films that define the post-1970 war movie are morally dark, profoundly alienated works created by visionary/rebel younger directors. The Vietnam worldview required not a Fred Zinneman or Robert Aldrich, but Kubrick, Coppola, Stone, Malick. Set on the brink of nihilism, with acid rock replacing the old martial melodies, the vision was not upward into sun and clouds, but downward into mud and agony. War was terrifying, the soldier an animal writhing in his own fear. These films lingered on the details of physical discomfort (Charlie Sheen in *Platoon*, passing out from overexertion while slapping at ants biting his neck), and matched them to an absolute failure of deeper, moral comforts. The aims of war were obscure at best, your fate lay in the hands of fools (or worse); and back home your girlfriend, far from awaiting your heroic return, was sleeping with someone else. Vietnam-inspired films mounted an assault on patriotism, asserting a universal capacity for evil that made *Heart of Darkness* the emblematic Vietnam text, and scripting the testimony of the soldier-witness—whether the outrage of Tom Cruise's paraplegic vet in *Born on the Fourth* or the haunted metaphysical voiceovers in *The Thin Red Line*—as one of brutal, total disillusion.

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The eighties brought a backlash. Reagan/Bush conservatism recast the military in the old, heroic mode, culminating in Desert Storm, an effort mirrored in films ranging from the *Rambo* movies, to *Top Gun* and *The Right Stuff*, to Clint Eastwood's *Heartbreak Ridge*. This effort to reverse the despised "malaise" of the seventies has continued apace, part of the culture wars of the past twenty years; and it's in this context that *Pearl Harbor*, a patently lightweight movie, proves a heavy lifter, a benchmark in the restoration of patriotic mythmaking.

From the start, *Pearl Harbor*, a $135-million extravaganza by the producer-director team of Jerry Bruckheimer and Michael Bay (*Armageddon*, *The Rock*), sets us down in a nostalgia-drenched, fantasyland America, the opening scenes painting a Norman Rockwell-like portrait of two boys—best friends—on a farm in the South in 1923. Fooling around in cropduster dad's plane, donning aviator's caps with earflaps, the boys press a wrong button and go careening across golden wheat fields, jubilantly shouting, "We're flying!" Now cut to 1941, and Rafe and Danny (Ben Affleck and Josh Hartnett) have grown up into Army Air Corps fighter pilots—both stationed on Pearl Harbor, both in love with the same woman, and both chomping at the bit to turn aerial daredevilry into heroism.

Pearl Harbor is a museum of WWII-era Americana: big band dances, Army nurses, lots of colorful '40s fashions, and goodbye kisses on train platforms. The flyboys take their dates up in their planes at sunset; an aura of merry fraternal pranksterism pervades, tempered by aw-shucks shyness around girls ("I got some genuine French champagne—from France"). Meanwhile, we keep cutting to the council of black-clad Japanese generals—announced with an ominous drumbeat and screen-filling shots of the imperial flag—grimly plotting their attack. It's the Japanese war machine against a ragtag band of farmboys in hula shirts. "I didn't even know the Japs were sore at us!" one of our boys yells as the Zeros roar by. "They're kicking our butt! Let's get in the airplanes!"

Such contrasts stroke our sense of folksy, slapdash American bravery, indulging our fantasy of being the underdog, dangerously underestimated. "If there are more like you," a British officer tells Rafe when he does a stint flying for the RAF, "God help anyone who goes to war with America." *Pearl Harbor* is full of that kind of sentiment—a cinematic boy's story, through and through. When Cuba Gooding, playing a proud African American cook, complains bitterly that he's never been allowed to fire a weapon, we know he'll get his vindication during the chaos of the attack. When Rafe and Danny pull a dangerous aerial game of chicken during training, and are reprimanded—with a wink—by their colonel (Alec Baldwin), we know we'll see the stunt again—only next time to the detriment of some unlucky Japanese pilots.

It's all high spirits and cute story lines and swelling music, and, at the end, a shot at a glorious soldier's death, a chance to join, as a closing voiceover intones, "The Brotherhood of Heroes." *Pearl Harbor* returns us to the kind of war movie that calls time out for dying-buddy soliloquies amid the flying bullets. It puts all the old reassurances back in, the ones those seventies films took out.

It's startling to see an essentially nineteenth-century romantic vision assembled so faithfully in a twenty-first century film. And discouraging, too. Not because *Pearl Harbor* is such a negligible movie (though it is), but because the bleakness of the post-1970 war movies, their claw-like grip on the moral ambiguity of power, didn't come easily to America, and seeing the war-as-glory ethos revived this way feels like a lot of work being undone. The darkness of the Vietnam films contained hard-won insights that shouldn't be made light of. For instance, missing wholly from *Pearl Harbor*—deeply inimical to it—is any trace of the earlier films' critique of male authority. Put the gung-ho pep talk by Baldwin up against Nick Nolte's performance in *The Thin Red Line*, as an officer confronted (by John Cusack) over his eagerness to send men to their deaths. Nolte's belligerent soliloquy of ambition and macho bluster is a chilling portrayal of mixed motives that makes Baldwin's scenes, indeed his entire character, look and sound like a fairy tale.

Some will say I'm missing the point of *Pearl Harbor*, a generational tribute at a demographic moment in which "the silent artillery of time," as Lincoln called it, is taking out over 400,000 American WWII vets each year. But is turning war back into a fairy tale the best way to pay this tribute? At movie's end, following a shot of the battleship *Arizona*, grown over with weeds at the bottom of the harbor, we revisit that same Norman Rockwell farm, where another boy, wearing that same aviator's cap, is learning to fly, a new generation of sons being grown for the next harvest of glory.

It's easy enough to shrug off *Pearl Harbor*'s sentimental glory-making as mere entertainment, harmless nostalgia, or marketing (Hasbro is bringing out a line of Pearl Harbor G.I. Joes). But maybe it should make us at least slightly nervous. In the lobby after the movie I ran into a friend and his ten-year-old son. How did he like it? I asked the boy.

Cool, he said, with a huge grin. □

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Summer reading

Francis DeBernardo

Francis DeBernardo is the executive director of New Ways Ministry.

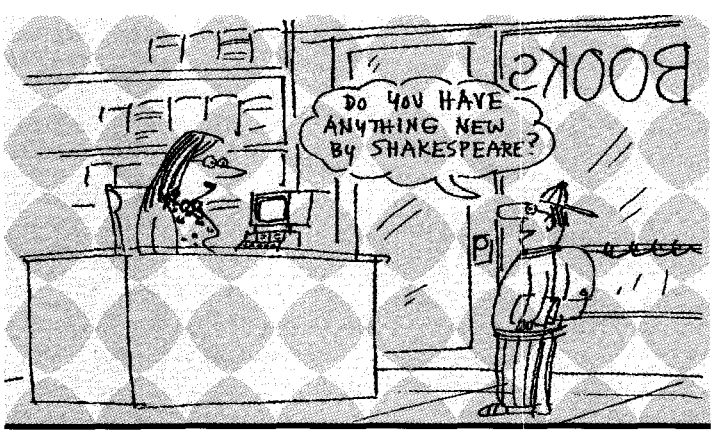
My father, a retired New York City sanitation department foreman, often waxes philosophical about his former career: "It is the securest job in the world," he observes. "As long as there are human beings, there will always be garbage." Augustine of Hippo, I'm sure, would agree.

If summer is the time for "trashy" reading—lighter books that travel well to the park, the beach, campsites, or whatever place you are relaxing and asked not to litter—then I recommend three books that examine our required lot in life of dealing with the garbage we produce, whether actual, spiritual, or cultural.

In *Fat of the Land: Garbage in New York—The Last Two Hundred Years* (Four Walls Eight Windows, $18, 414 pp.), Benjamin Miller, a former director of policy planning for New York City's Department of Sanitation, dons the hat of social historian to tell the sprawling tale of the various and disparate interests—health care, greed, agriculture, recreation, urban planning, political ambition, environmental concerns, and technological development—that have shaped New York's sanitation policy. For example, it may be dismaying, though not surprising, to find that what we now take for granted as a democratic institution had its origins not in good government, but because of concern by power elites that the wealthy were beginning to die in a cholera epidemic that had already taken the lives of so many of New York's poor. Or that what we throw away as unproductive and worthless actually later lives as agriculture, as bedrock for recreation facilities and urban infrastructure, and as the subject of fiercely contested business and financial transactions.

In Miller's book, we see the expected cast of colorful New York characters: Robert Moses, Fiorello LaGuardia, Boss Tweed, Jimmy Walker. But we also learn how Jeremy Bentham, Charles Dickens, Baron von Liebig, Thomas Edison, and Louis Napoleon influenced sanitation policy. By examining a mundane phenomenon, Miller gives an entertaining and enlightening history not only of New York City, but of national and international events.

Turning to garbage on another level, the spiritual, there is no better writer than Anne Lamott. She should be canonized as the patron saint of people who struggle with faith. In three nonfiction works and five novels, this California native brings to light the poignant minutiae of everyday life where both God and despair rush in. In her most recent and most explicitly religious nonfiction work, *Traveling Mercies: Some Reflections on Faith* (Anchor, $13, 275 pp.), Lamott writes about the joy of the gospel life in the midst of the insanity and garbage that humans are wont to create.



Lamott's experiences and reflections are far from traditional. She is a recovering bulimic, alcoholic, and cocaine addict, and a single mom who found Christianity through the experience of worshiping with an African American Presbyterian congregation in California. She finds religious significance in examining the cellulite on her thighs while waiting for a bus at the beach. Imagine a voice that is a mixture of François Rabelais, Erma Bombeck, Thérèse of Lisieux, Jerry Seinfeld, and Lily Tomlin. Some of her writings will shock readers expecting a more moderate view of spirituality (her exclamation at the moment of conversion would not be allowed on prime time), but her profound and unusual insights refresh the gospel message of unconditional love.

Lamott writes not from a peaceful center, but from the muck of real encounters. Her conversion changes her perspective, but not all her behaviors and attitudes. She does not write as a spiritual master. Instead she tells stories of fear, jealousy, pettiness, anger, attachment, overprotection, loss, and lust which is where most of us fight our spiritual battles. She does not offer methods or concepts. The only prayer advice she gives is her favorite morning prayer—"Whatever"—and her favorite evening prayer—"Oh, well." This is a book for anyone whose spiritual journey has not followed a textbook model. Which is just about everyone.

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No genre is better suited for the garbage of social and cultural life than satire. And no one else today is writing satire as good as that of David Sedaris. He made his mark as the author of the *Santaland Diaries* (Dramatists Play Service, $5.95), a journal of working as an elf one season in Macy's Christmas extravaganza. A gay former furniture mover, house cleaner, and writing teacher, Sedaris has viewed our culture from the underside, and it isn't pretty. Though his recounting of it is hilarious.

In his latest collection of autobiographical essays, *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (Little Brown, $14.95, 288 pp.), Sedaris targets the Internet, nouvelle cuisine, speech therapy for boys who lisp, performance artists, crossword puzzles, television, Christmas family newsletters, and ungracious houseguests. His best chapters focus on extended trips to France where he tries to learn the language.

In one such chapter, "Jesus Shaves," Sedaris describes his language class's attempt to explain Easter to a fellow student, a Moroccan-born Muslim. While Sedaris wants to believe he and the others are speaking fluently, he [mercilessly] translates their garbled French: "He call his self Jesus and the he be die one day on two...morsels of...lumber....He die one day and then he go above of my head to live with your father." Sedaris dryly explains that the problem was vocabulary: "Simple nouns such as cross and resurrection were beyond our grasp, let alone such complicated reflexive phrases as 'to give of yourself your only begotten son.'"

Sedaris is a satirist in the great tradition of Juvenal, Erasmus, Swift, and Twain. Like the best of them, he is not simply a finger-pointer, but often turns his observant eye toward his own curious behavior. Currently a National Public Radio commentator and a regular contributor to Ira Glass's "This American Life," Sedaris has honed his writing skills in an oral medium which makes for a breezy and easy conversational tone to his writing. This friendly veneer barely masks a wit that is wickedly biting and sharp, and, like all good satire, curative.

Hilary Mantel

Hilary Mantel is the author of eight novels, of which the latest is The Giant, O'Brien *(Henry Holt). She lives in England.*

In 1944, a Scotswoman named Helen Duncan was tried at London's Central Criminal Court, on charges under the Witchcraft Act of 1735. No one supposed that "Hellish Nell"—as she'd been known in her childhood—flew about on a broomstick wearing a pointy hat. Her business was that of a high-earning, grossly fraudulent spiritualist medium.

According to historian Malcolm Gaskill, whose dispassionate but involving *Hellish Nell: The Last Witch in Britain* (Fourth Estate, £15.99, 402 pp.) tells the story of Helen Duncan, the archaic legislation was employed because it gave the best guarantee of her conviction. The eight-day trial—held in a blacked-out city reeling from bombing raids—caused a sensation in the popular press, which called Nell Duncan "the Saint Joan of Spiritualism." The distress and uncertainty of war time had given fresh impetus to the spirit game, but frauds were usually dealt with in the lower courts under laws designed to trap traveling fortunetellers. It was natural that Helen Duncan attracted public sympathy. She was an uneducated woman, well into middle age, and chronically ill. Why, people asked, did the government think it vital to silence her by a prison sentence?

The answer, according to her friends and conspiracy theorists everywhere, lay in a seance that Nell had given in the naval base of Portsmouth, three years earlier. A young sailor had materialized, claiming to be from HMS *Barham*, a warship stationed in the eastern Mediterranean. His anxious relatives contacted the naval authorities, and gave those authorities a big problem: They alone knew that the *Barham* had been sunk, with the loss of more than 850 lives, but for strategic reasons the government was concealing it from the public and would not officially announce

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it for some three months. How did Nell find out that the crew of the *Barham* were dead? Inside information seemed an unlikely source; so did she really have the psychic powers she claimed? In any event, the security services were involved in building the case that put her behind bars.

Gaskill has taken apart the case of Hellish Nell, exploring not just this central incident but also her early life, her career history, and her motivation, in a narrative which has much to tell us about the way that poverty and war impact on the human imagination. In the end, it is impossible not to feel sorry for the old fraud—while wondering why the established religions failed so badly that the terrified and the bereaved sought comfort from revenants made of butter muslin and chewed paper.

The Adversary by Emmanuel Carrère (translated by Linda Coverdale, Metropolitan, $22, 191 pp.) is one of the strangest, strongest books I have read in years; it demands to be consumed at one sitting, such is its intense and bitter flavor. It is an exploration of a false identity, and a true crime: in 1993, Jean Claude Romand killed his wife, his children, and his dog, then drove across country to murder his elderly parents. As far as his friends and neighbors were concerned, Jean Claude was a doctor who commuted across the Swiss border every day to his senior post with the World Health Organization in Geneva. In the wake of his crime, it turned out that WHO had never heard of him. For eighteen years he had sheltered under a false identity. A small lie, told to cover himself when he was a student, had brought him to spin an all-encompassing web of deceit. Emmanuel Carrère visited him when he was in prison, and tried to tease out the secrets of his peculiar psychology. His short and tightly written book is piquant, very French: shocking, exact, and wise.

Bad Blood by Lorna Sage (forthcoming in the United States from Morrow; available in the United Kingdom from Fourth Estate, £15.99, 281 pp.) is an exquisite memoir, and last year's winner of the Whitbread Prize for Biography. Lorna Sage was a literary critic, and head of the department of American Studies at the University of East Anglia; she was a critic and teacher who nurtured and empowered other writers. She was also, it proved, the survivor of an extraordinary and tumultuous childhood, which she recreated in beautiful, witty, and considered prose. She died, at fifty-seven, a week after receiving the Whitbread award, leaving us a classic fragment of autobiography which has been compared to Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*. Her photograph, as a radiant teenage blonde, is on the book jacket; but it's the exquisite writing between the covers that really lights up her life. This is the book I am buying for my friends, knowing that it will amuse them, awe them, and touch their hearts. When I teach writing, I say it and say it again: To write a great book, you don't have to sail the seven seas, commit great crimes, dramatize, or even invent. The extraordinary is apt to be ephemeral. It's in ordinary lives, lived bravely, that we see most clearly the transfiguring, persistent, universalizing power of art.

Grant Gallicho

Grant Gallicho is Commonweal*'s editorial assistant.*

I am not one for beach reading. Or for beaches at all. When I think of summer reading, I think of being cooked in a subway station, thankful for a book engaging enough to take my mind away from slow roasting until the next refrigerator on rails arrives. A good book levels dramatic external changes in temperature by inducing some of its own in the reader. There are two sorts of books that achieve this: Those that can be closed as you enter a train car and returned to, once inside, without much loss of momentum or meaning; and those that require continual reading even as you navigate the sea of commuters trying to exit the train.

Lucchesi and the Whale (Duke University Press, $17.95, 115 pp.) falls into the latter category. Frank Lentricchia, the "Dirty Harry of contemporary literary theory," as the *Village Voice* dubbed him, has melded the genres of literary criticism and fiction in the rarest of ways—one that works. In a fragmentary fictional structure, Lentricchia waxes philosophical about language, the act of writing, and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*.

Don't let Melville put you off. The difficult literary criticism that forms the centerpiece of *Lucchesi and the Whale* is well worth the effort. By the time you arrive at it, you've been wooed into accepting both the authorial eccentricities of Lentricchia, and those of his fictional counterpart, Thomas Lucchesi.

Introduced as a "recessed bachelor," Lucchesi is a one-time college professor, living with his parents. He leaves his home only to visit dying friends—not to comfort them or their loved ones—but because only during his travels to deathbeds is he inspired to write.

The book is largely a portrait of Lucchesi's mind, through which biographical scenes, like that of an unconsummated childhood crush, and Kafkaesque dream sequences run. It's not always clear when the scene is a dream and when a memory—but that's the point, memory often being equal parts authenticity and revision.

Interspersed are snippets of Lucchesi's theories on writing. His credo: "Cancel all sentiment." Memoirs, he opines, are "the literary disgrace of our time," little more than forced vulnerability. The remedy? "Have no shame. Reach in. Smear it on the wall...hide nothing, so that you'll be freed for serious writing."

The serious writing here is literary theory. Lentricchia wedges a brilliant riff on *Moby-Dick* into the voice of Lucchesi, who asks, "Is this, then, already, the tedious debacle of what they call, in the academy, a reading?" Lucchesi practices textual criticism. But, at the same time, he indicts himself and the process by which interpretation deprives a literary work of its "shimmer." He knows, in the end, art will win. "Death by criticism. I die; M-D survives."

M-D? Yes, Lucchesi tells us: "Moby HYPHEN Dick, title of book. Moby UNHYPHEN Dick, name of the White

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Whale." If all of that sounds a bit cerebral, that's because it is. But voyage with Lucchesi and Lentricchia and you'll emerge with a new, broader understanding of Melville, *Moby-Dick*, and perhaps even the immortality of writing.

If *Lucchesi* is a book you cannot easily read piecemeal, Dan Rhodes's *Anthropology* (Random House, $18.95, 217 pp.) is its opposite. With 101 short stories of 101 words each, *Anthropology* is built for single-serving reading. This is more gimmick than art form, but it's a gimmick I'm happy to abide. And Rhodes's single-minded attention to his male narrators' failed relationships yields real insights.

Some of the vignettes are brutally pointed and hilarious: "My girlfriend is so beautiful that she has never had cause to develop any kind of personality." Others are timely and even touching: "Unable to accept that Celestia was no more than a haphazard cluster of chemicals brought together by chance in a universe out of control, I started to believe." Still others are outrageous: "Petrified at the thought of age withering my boyish good looks, Sundial blinded herself with a soldering iron." While the stories often seem like miniature episodes of "The Twilight Zone," *Anthropology* manages to convey, with a remarkable economy of words, and in mostly ironic tones, how absurd we can be, how desperate, how obsessed with sex and surfaces and ourselves—often in that order.

A warning to the sensitive: there are some slightly shocking moments of vulgarity. I am quite pleased to be jolted out of subway catatonia by something other than stench, and even more satisfied knowing I can keep this book in my bag and return to it whenever I want.

Alan Lightman, MIT physicist and now professor of writing, made a splash in 1993 with his first foray into fiction, *Einstein's Dreams* (Warner Books, $10.95, 181 pp.). If you haven't gotten to it yet, put it on your summer reading list. Lightman imagines a young Einstein in 1905, patent clerk in Berne, hunched over his desk after another long night composing his theory of time. He dreams of other worlds in which time's meaning varies.

In one world, time occasionally loops back on itself, and people are carried to the past on rivulets of temporal flow. These women and men speak in whispers, try not to act on the past to prevent themselves from destroying the future. In another world, everyone knows the precise time when the world will end. "A world with one month is a world of equality." In yet another, there is no future; cause and effect have no meaning.

Everything finally depends on time: the assumption of past as informant of the present, and the assumption of future as a possibility. What we do with our time is what Lightman wants us to think about, even in the subway, where saving time is everything.

Marguerite Feitlowitz

Marguerite Feitlowitz is the author of A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture *(Oxford). A translator of French, Spanish, and Catalan, she writes often about literature and art.*

Let us now praise promiscuity, by which I mean a spirited romp through the genres of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

Smaller than my own hand, lighter than a wineglass, and slim enough to read within the frame of a single hour, Alan Bennett's *The Clothes They Stood Up In* (Random House, $13.95, 161 pp.) is every inch a novel. Written by one of England's most prominent playwrights, it is layered and razor-sharp, hilarious and moving. The sedate Mr. and Mrs. Ransome have been to the opera "(...*Cosí*, as Mrs. Ransome had learned to call it)" and returned home to bicker quietly over whether they have just been "burgled" or "robbed." Every single thing they own is gone—every lamp and switch and fixture, every hairbrush, toothbrush, light bulb, and battery. But for the clothes they are wearing, the Ramsomes suddenly have nothing, not even (they can barely say it) a square of paper for the loo. For Mrs. Ransome, who will soon stride out into the unfamiliar depths of her Notting Hill neighborhood, worlds upon worlds are about to open. Pending settlement from their insurers (handled with opportunistic aplomb by her husband, a solicitor whose only passion is Mozart) she sets out to re-feather their nest, but temporarily, with maiden visits to secondhand markets (where she buys an Afghan prayer rug), the Asian grocer, the Egyptian chemist. These are the establishments that had replaced the ones of the defining years of her marriage: Miss Dorsey's for baby gifts and knitwear; Timothy White, across whose counter one whispered the sizes of one's intimate foundations; the eternally hushed tea shop on the corner. The world, Mrs. Ransome suddenly sees, had turned over. And it is marvelous, full of "characters" with new ways of speaking and moving and eating. Everything calls out to be relearned, including conjugal desire. The plot twists and turns. The burglary (or robbery) turns out to have been an error of baroque complications, and is repaired. The Ransomes' little world looks as it did before. But everything is different.

Karmic Traces (New Directions, $15.95, 192 pp.) is the third volume of essays by Eliot Weinberger, translator of Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges, among other authors. The twenty-four pieces gathered here reflect voracious curiosity, wanderlust, and encyclopedic knowledge of peoples, places, rituals, and religions. Set in Iceland, Hong Kong, India, and Mexico, and spanning three millennia, these essays are rife with vivid particulars and astounding oddities. In "Sex Objects," Weinberger leads up to Sappho with a catalogue of the fancy mating habits of birds and fish and a couple of pint-sized mammals. His portraits of the poets Hugh MacDiarmid, James Laughlin, and Omar Cáceres—contrasting figures, to put it mildly—are finely etched in terms of character, place, and time. On literature and politics, Weinberger is informed, edgy, and tart: In "What Was Formalism," he lambasts an anthology called *Rebel Angels* as being full of "wimps, café Republicans measuring out their lives in coffee

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spoons that keep changing size" (that is, not one of these so-called formal poets can reliably create a sonnet, let alone a villanelle). Weinberger is a rare treat: Montaigne, who invented the *essai*, would love him.

One of the great poets of Spain's Generation of 1927, Jorge Guillén went into permanent exile during the Spanish Civil War. His bent is metaphysical and literary, but his (very modern) eye is focused on the world. In Manhattan, he exults among the skyscrapers only to exhort: "Look: space." Guillén has been translated before and well, but *Horses in the Air and Other Poems*, translated by Cola Franzen (City Lights, $15.95, 248 pp.) is a landmark. Winner of The Academy of American Poets Prize for Translation, this bilingual collection is at once faithful and inventive, elegant and immediate. As a reader, Franzen has the penetration of a laser; a grammarian, she knows how to pick her way among the landmines; a poet herself, she knows that poetry is borne on the breath. From "A Window":

There are polished words,
But I would like to know as the
June air knows.
The poplar's stirring makes a visible
breeze,
in a circle of peace the evening
encloses me,
and a soaring sky adapts to my
horizon.

There is no hint in Franzen's work of the difficult choices presented in every line. Here is "Freckles," seasonal and entire:

Mallarmé, pen-brush,
compares the dry leaves
of autumn to skin with freckles:
Sun loves that skin so much.
Woman! When fair between the
freckles
I am reminded of ripe wheat,
witness of summer.
That whiteness! So bright
it needs a shelter
of golden shadow.

The history of the world is in great measure the history of translation. In this season of sun, let there be light on Cola Franzen, one of our finest living translators.

Elizabeth Shannon

Elizabeth Shannon directs the Trustee Scholar and International Visitors programs at Boston University.

This is the Time of the Irish. Of course, if you are Irish, you know it won't last because nothing good ever does. But take the summer to revel in it with *Irish America Coming into Clover: The Evolution of a People and a Culture* (Doubleday, $25, 320 pp.) by *Boston Globe* staff writer Maureen Dezell. She probes the psyche of Irish Americans with humor, sympathy, and acerbic insight, and tracks their movement from immigrant poverty to a secure place in today's prosperity.

"The Irish," writes Dezell, quoting Mary Gordan, "have managed to do these things no one else could do...the English told them they couldn't learn to read, and they produced some of the best literature in the English language. Their church wasn't supposed to exist, and it became the strongest Catholic church in the world. A whole population is wiped out by famine and they come here with no skills, no money, no family, and prosper beyond anyone's expectations." That was achieved, however, not totally without succumbing to the oldest Irish bugaboo, a "swelled head."

Dezell notes that whereas "emotional reserve and humility are considered virtues in Ireland," the Irish in America have "bowdlerized and hyperdramatized their heritage," creating a brash culture of their own. Chicago Irish dance star Michael Flatley serves as "a consummate example of Irish Americanism in overdrive...with his dyed hair, faux brogue, razzle-dazzle, and Disneyfied renditions of Irish dance, he is emblematic of much that the native Irish both loathe and begrudgingly admire in their embarrassing immigrant cousins." It was that very razzle-dazzle that put poor Irish Americans into political office and board rooms, two of the places they are now most at home. At the same time, the rise of Irish American studies programs and increased travel to Ireland as a cultural "homeland" have done much to narrow the breach between immigrant and native cultures.

Dezell's book is noteworthy for the attention she gives to a neglected area of Irish American history: immigrant women. Her chapter "Bridget, Open the Door," on the Irish servant girl, is fresh and fascinating. Teenagers who had spent their lives in remote cottages in the west of Ireland crossed the Atlantic alone in steerage and a few weeks later were "serving squab from Limoges china in Boston's Back Bay or polishing silver in Fifth Avenue homes." At the turn of the century, in distinction from their European counterparts, 60 percent or more of Irish immigrants were single women. These women saved their money and sent it home to help pay the fares of their siblings. And they contributed a significant amount of their income to the Catholic church. It is a bitter irony that "there is virtually no mention of women in the standard texts of American Catholic history," writes historian Mary Jo Weaver. Heretofore nearly all the women in standard Irish American histories have appeared as sisters and wives.

Not that those stories aren't fascinating too, as Katie Hickman's new *Daughters of Britannia: The Lives and Times of Diplomatic Wives* (Morrow, $25, 352 pp.) amply demonstrates. Herself a diplomatic daughter, Hickman chronicles the experiences of British Foreign Service wives from the seventeenth century until the mid-1990s. From copious letters (collected and saved when letter writing was the only way far-flung wives had of keeping in touch with family and friends at home), from diaries, journals, and personal interviews, she has put together a well-written history, both scholarly in research and vastly entertaining.

As a group, diplomatic wives appear enterprising, stalwart, and brave. They faced danger, loneliness, and illness in far-off and sometimes primitive lands. Some, such as Vita Sackville-West whose husband, Harold Nicholson, was post-

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ed in Persia, rebelled. She found her duties frivolous and came home. Others found their social obligations daunting. "The height of my earthly aspirations is to be allowed to abstain from pleasure," Countess Granville wrote to her sister in 1825, exhausted from a endless series of soirées in Paris.

Until air travel became accessible, just "getting there" was a formidable challenge. Traveling "light" was not in the vocabulary of these nomads. From the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, keeping a large diplomatic household supplied with food and other necessities could be a nightmare, and diplomats and their wives took what they could to supplement often meager supplies. "The prize...must surely go to Lady Carlisle who, when her husband made his public entry into Moscow in 1663, accompanied him in her own carriage...followed by 200 sledges loaded with luggage." Even as late as the 1960s, when food supplies were difficult to come by in Russia, the attic of the British Embassy in Moscow was turned into a vast chicken coop so that the staff could enjoy the luxury of fresh eggs. (While I served in Dublin with my late husband, Ambassador William Shannon, I raised my own chickens for eggs, cows for milk and beef, and tended a huge vegetable garden...not that all of these things weren't easily available in Ireland, but it stretched a tight embassy budget!)

Diplomats are often the targets of terrorists around the world. Hickman and her family were posted at the British embassy in Dublin in 1976 when Ambassador Christopher Ewart Biggs was blown up in his car by the IRA as he traveled from his home to his office. His widow tells Hickman "perhaps too much is asked of diplomatic wives; they are shot at and bombed, their children taken from them, they waste away by tropical disease, their husbands kidnapped or even killed, but they are always expected to be there, to look nice, to say the right thing, to have no definite views of their own, and to remember everyone's names."

Certainly, air travel and rapid communication have eased the lives of today's diplomatic families. Nevertheless, it is still difficult for a spouse to follow a diplomat from post to post, and pursue any career other than the partnership requires. The lucky couples are the ones in which husband and wife share a sense of adventure, a love of travel, and the flexibility to settle into new and foreign situations, and where both are happy to serve their country "for the price of one."

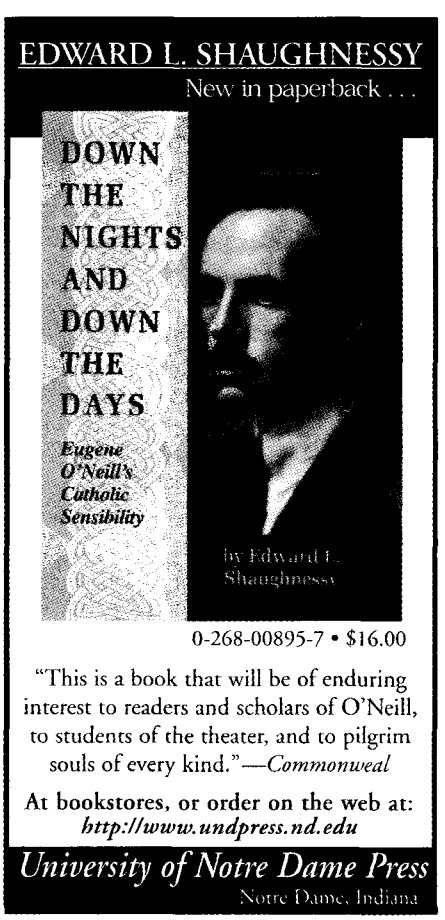
Phillip Pulaski

Phillip Pulaski is a physician at Boston Healthcare for the Homeless and a member of the board of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship.

I've just returned from my third trip to Lourdes, where I serve as a physician accompanying the American Knights of Malta on their annual pilgrimage. Lourdes is the most important healing shrine in the world, attracting more than 5 million pilgrims a year. Wherein lies its appeal? In the readable and scholarly *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (Penguin, $17, 474 pp.), Ruth Harris, a secular Jewish historian at Oxford, provides some answers. Harris begins by placing Bernadette's encounter with the Virgin Mary (there were a total of eighteen apparitions in the winter and spring of 1858) within the wider context of centuries of Marian veneration among the poor inhabitants of the Pyrenees in southern France.

While Bernadette joined a religious order and drifted into obscurity, the apparitions inspired the religious imagination of both the rural poor and educated urban Catholics, who proclaimed their faith, often in open defiance of secular authority. The lure of the supernatural, the encounter with the divine, came face to face with rationalism, positivism, and the glorified world of the secular. By 1870–71, France faced cataclysm, losing the Franco-Prussian war and then undergoing civil war in Paris. But in Lourdes, a different story emerged. Women (both poor and members of the aristocracy), under the guidance of the Assumptionists, provided hands-on care for the sick and dying. Intense spiritual bonds formed. Harris eloquently demonstrates how the rites and rituals of Lourdes (pilgrimage, eucharistic processions, bathing the sick in miraculous waters) became at once a means of honoring God's redemptive presence in the world of suffering, and, at the same time, reflective of an underlying ideology which sought to restore the Catholic church's influence in society by backing a besieged Vatican and working for a re-Christianized France. Most troubling in this story are the vicious anti-Semitic and profascist groups that co-opted Lourdes as far forward as World War II.

The miraculous apparitions at Lourdes inspired many twentieth-century Catholics, most noteworthy, perhaps, the heroic English couple, Leonard Cheshire and Sue Ryder, subjects of two outstanding books. Cheshire and Ryder made annual pilgrimages to Lourdes and a Sue Ryder Maison de Marie Hotel is now run by Katy Fitzsimmons, Ryder's close friend and collaborator. Richard Morris's *Cheshire: The Biography of Leonard*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Cheshire VC, OM (Viking, $20, 530 pp.) tells the story of Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, one of Britain's greatest World War II aviators, and in the postwar period, one of her greatest saints. Cheshire completed 100 bombing runs over Nazi Germany during the war; his 101st mission was as an observer of the bombing of Nagasaki. After the war, profoundly affected by what he had witnessed, Cheshire went from fame and fortune to a joyless life and an involuntary discharge from the military (due to "psychoneurosis"). He yearned for a world that worked for peace.

Cheshire's vocation came to him as he cared for a friend dying of cancer. He converted to Catholicism on Christmas Eve, 1948. His life's work was, in his words, "to take those that are unwanted, and to make them wanted. Not to say to them: 'Now just lie back and be comfortably sick for the rest of your life'; but to give them a purpose to live for, to give them the means of rising above their infirmity, to turn them into active members of the family, active helpers in the work that still has so far to go, so many countries to reach." He dedicated himself to an international movement to ameliorate third-world suffering. By the time of his death in 1992, Cheshire was considered one of Britain's greatest humanitarian figures. His legacy: 270 homes for the disabled in forty countries. Nehru described him as the greatest man he had met since Gandhi.

Sue Ryder's autobiography, *Child of My Love* (Harvill, $32, 656 pp.) is an epic of the twentieth century. Ryder chronicles that period by telling stories of many unpublicized individuals who exhibited extraordinary courage, sacrifice, and suffering while defending human freedom. Sue Ryder's mother, Mabel, had worked on behalf of the poor in rural England during the Great Depression. When World War II broke out, Sue, age seventeen, also sought to serve. She enrolled in the Special Operations Executive, a clandestine branch responsible for training resistance fighters in occupied Europe. Ryder was assigned to the Polish section and witnessed, firsthand, terrible suffering but also "courage and selflessness, hope and generosity, humor and warmth."

After the war, Ryder set up a foundation to honor those who had given their lives. Her mantra: "I have always been surprised by the number of well-meaning people with a genuine desire to help who have looked at the enormity facing humanity and said, 'The problem is too big—there is nothing I can do as an individual to help.' The truth is there are few problems confronting humanity that are incapable of solution if only a sufficient number of human beings apply their hearts and energies. I believe that nothing in my life could ever have occurred except through God's will and also by the example of countless people. It is through them that I have learnt." During the 1940s and 1950s she labored tirelessly for those who had no voice in Germany and Eastern Europe. After she married Leonard Cheshire in 1958, her focus was international, and included work in India, Singapore, Australia, and Somalia. Her foundation set up scores of homes for victims of war and for the physically disabled. But it is the everyday stories she tells, revealing the degree to which Cheshire and Ryder integrated their faith, their work, and their marriage, that I find particularly inspiring.

In the words of Richard Morris, Cheshire "often told us that all journeys begin with a first step. If there are times when it seems that history, like polar ice, is afloat on currents which flow contrary to progress, we can nevertheless see that Leonard Cheshire and Sue Ryder together helped humanity forward for a measurable distance. There are few figures in history of which this can be said." □

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BUMPY LANDING

Carlos Lozada

Viva el Perú!

The cry issues forth the instant our plane touched ground, no coincidence. Even half asleep, I expected it. Sitting up, I tug on the window shade. Lima materializes before my eyes, no skyline to speak of, the coast obliterated by an eternal fog—the standard greeting from a hometown that has long ceased to feel like home, a birthplace that barely recognizes me. A couple of uneasy bounces later, the wheels of the jet settle on the runway and begin to spin furiously, squealing and dragging their way to the terminal. They don't want to be here, either.

A smattering of cheers and applause echo the first yell. *Viva el Perú, carajo*! Some passengers even shout their allegiance to local soccer clubs—*Arriba Alianza*! *Y dale U*!—apropos of nothing. The pilot acknowledges this ritualistic show of gratitude, mumbling his thanks over the loudspeaker.

I hate the cheers, always have. We're not back for two seconds before we must proclaim to the whole of humanity that we remain so very third world that a safe plane landing compels us to scream and clap in wonder. The shouts last only a few seconds, but for that eternity I feel like Tattoo on "Fantasy Island," cheering for da plane, while the Americans on board—the tourists, backpackers, and foreign investors—all morph into Mister Roarkes, smiling upon the natives with a paternalistic tenderness usually reserved for children, zoo animals, or buffoons.

Well before we reach the terminal, the Peruvian passengers crowd the aisles and begin emptying the overheads, groping for Sea World sweatshirts, liquor boxes from the Duty Free, bags from Dadeland mall—predictable loot of a first and probably last trip to South Florida. "Ladies and gentlemen," the admonition crackles through some hidden loudspeaker, first in Spanish and then in broken English, "please remain seated with your seat belt on until the plane has come to a full and complete stop…"

Neither language breaks through; my compatriots remain upright, content in their indifference to the monotone pleas of authority. We've always been like this, I realize, as schoolchildren elbowing our way onto a school bus, as worshipers jousting for Communion. This is simply "how we do things," orderless, curiously herd-like in our individualism.

The Americans become restless, anthropological novelty giving way to everyday annoyance. We're delaying them and they don't like it. A rotund, middle-aged man with the label "gringo tourist" all but stamped on his forehead—no doubt he's catching a connecting flight to Cuzco, where he'll snap copious shots of the Machu Picchu ruins—whispers to his wisp of a travel companion, who nods sagely. They roll their eyes, gawking at the pandemonium in the aisles. The big one whispers again, eliciting a chuckle from his companion. They laugh together. As I watch them, a long dormant sense of pride (I might even call it patriotism, if I could remember how that feels) emerges to counter my own misgivings.

"Who the hell are you laughing at?" My question shoots out, knee-jerk, instinctual. Or at least that is what I'll explain should I ever tell the story. They looked at me confused, I'll reminisce someday, perplexed by this slender young man speaking to them in well-bred, overeducated English. They realized then that I was on to them, that I lived in the United States, that they had just insulted me and revealed their insufferable American arrogance—an arrogance I despise all the more because I can never truly share it, no matter where I live or where I earned my diplomas.

Except I do not speak at all. No sharp retort or witty rejoinder, no probing stare. Easy enough to pretend I do not hear them, or better yet, simply to feign incomprehension of the language. But had I spoken, my reply would have been anything but instinctual; it would have been deliberate, meticulous, relished forever in the instant between their laughter and my reply, making up for my shame and my silence, and for a thousand similar slights, real, imagined, and forthcoming.

We reach a full and complete stop. I wrestle into the aisle. In a moment I disappear amid my souvenir-toting compatriots and descend into customs, far away from the obese American, who must wait in a different line for foreign visitors, doubtless a more orderly one. Passport in hand—same as the U.S. passport really, just burgundy instead of navy blue, and no eagle on the cover—I wait in line to visit my home, a home I'll never escape or relinquish, no matter where I live or how long I'm gone. *Viva el Perú*. I try, but it's still hard to cheer. □

Carlos Lozada *is the associate editor of* Foreign Policy *magazine in Washington, D.C.*

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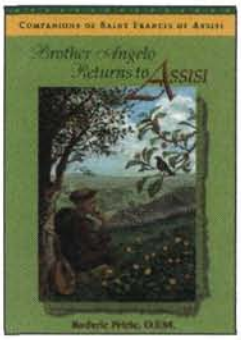
Books for summer reflection

New releases–Summer 2001

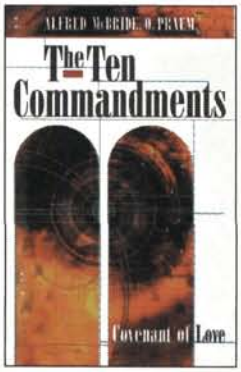
Armchair Mystic
Easing Into Contemplative Prayer
Mark E. Thibodeaux, S.J.

This user-friendly book blends theory and practice, gently and concretely taking the reader through the first steps of contemplative prayer. *Armchair Mystic* begins with the necessary details of time and place to pray, then presents the maturation of the prayer life in four stages: Talking at God, Talking to God, Listening to God and Being With God. *Armchair Mystic* will prove invaluable to individuals and small groups who are new to contemplative prayer, or who wish to deepen their experience of it. **B4301 $9.95**



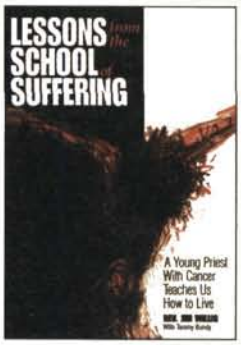
Brother Angelo Returns to Assisi
Companions of Saint Francis of Assisi
Roderic Petrie, O.F.M.

This is the third volume in a trilogy that is part history, part fiction, based on the anecdotes of Saint Francis' three companions: Rufino (*The Autumn of Saint Francis of Assisi*), Leo (*Brother Leo Remembers Francis*) and now Angelo, who reaped the memories of his two friends. **B4484 $7.95**



The Ten Commandments
Covenant of Love
Alfred McBride, O. Praem.

Entertaining, literate, thought-provoking, this instructive guide to the Ten Commandments is designed to be used equally well by individuals or small groups. Each commandment is introduced through an illustrative story, followed by a question about keeping the commandment. **B3763 $9.95**



Lessons From the School of Suffering
A Young Priest With Cancer Teaches Us How to Live
Rev. Jim Willig, with Tammy Bundy

In *Lessons From the School of Suffering*, Father Jim Willig shares his story of being diagnosed in his late 40's with terminal renal cancer and the consequences of living with cancer and undergoing various treatments, none of which have stemmed the disease. Willig, a beloved pastor and inspiring preacher, felt called to share the lessons he has learned from the great pain associated with having cancer. **B4557 $6.95**

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Rita Burns Senseman

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Julie Lytle

Lytle examines briefly the Sacrament of Confirmation and its ritual celebration, identifies the ways a person comes to the sacrament, summarizes the hallmarks of child and adolescent development, and offers suggestions for regular, consistent relationships and connections with young people. **B4387 $3.95**

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